

WSPTA recognizes that the most vulnerable in our community need our schools to eliminate barriers and facilitate the on-time grade level progression and graduation of foster and homeless students. Currently in Washington state, foster youth graduation from high school is less than 50%, versus the state average of 79%.¹ Resolving to do better, the WSPTA worked with a coalition to pass SB 5241 (2017).²

Background^{3,4}

- Foster and homeless youth face barriers such as moving to new schools suddenly. On average, youth in foster care face three placement changes. Each placement change equates to six months of lost academic progress.
- Schools have not been required to help students get credit for the coursework that they do complete and transfer successfully to new schools.
- There is a 15-20 percentage point gap in statewide achievement scores between foster youth and peers, and 25 percentage point gap in attainment of college degrees.
- Foster youth suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at twice the rate of PTSD as veterans returning from war.
- 50% of youth in foster care have chronic medical problems.
- 40-60% have at least one mental health disorder.
- 33% of foster youth live below the poverty line, which is 3 times the average U.S. rate.
- Foster youth are twice as likely to be pregnant by age 19.
- 1 in 5 foster youth will be homeless at least one day within a year of aging out of the foster care system.

What Does the New Law (SB5241) Do?

- **Modifies provisions governing school district requirements** for the on-time progression and graduation of qualifying dependent students, including requiring districts to consolidate partial credit and to grant partial credits in certain circumstances.
- **Extends the provisions of qualifying students to homeless students** for the governing school district requirements for the on-time progression and graduation.
- **Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt and distribute rules** related to the modified school district requirements.

Next Steps for 2018

- Drive for the WAC (Washington Administrative Code) completion and adoption of SB 5241 at OSPI (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) and school districts statewide.
- Champion and assist where possible the creation of the Department of Children, Youth and Families. (HB 1661 (2017)).⁵
- Support any upcoming 2018 bills in support of foster and homeless children.

For More Information

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Citations

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2. SB 5241 (2017). <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5241&Year=2017>
3. Burley, Mason (2013). WSSIP Educational Outcomes of Foster Youth—Updated Benchmarks. http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1341/Wsipp_Educational-Outcomes-of-Foster-Youth-Updated-Benchmarks_Full-Report.pdf
4. Casey Family Programs (2011). Foster Care by the Numbers. http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/portals/0/dmx/2013%5C07%5Cfile_20130719_111354_oStS_0.pdf
5. HB 1661 (2017). <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1661&Year=2017>

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