

2.20 Improving Outcomes for Foster and Homeless Youth

Resolution passed 2018

Whereas, the main factors contributing to youth being placed into foster care are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, medical neglect, incarceration, abandonment, truancy, parental death, runaway, juvenile offender, and addiction of either the child or parents/guardians; and

Whereas, the causes of homelessness typically stem from the impact of several factors over time such as structural factors (lack of adequate income/poverty, affordable housing, health supports, medical expenses or discrimination), system failures (inadequate transitioning from child welfare, foster care, hospitals, immigrant/refugee, corrections, mental health, addiction support or facilities), and individual factors (job loss, family breakup, pregnancy, domestic violence, and addiction); and

Whereas, it is difficult to capture the true number of homeless/houseless as many youth/families experience a fluid state of homelessness, cycling from sleeping in cars or parks to a shelter to a friend's home and back again to a shelter in which improvements in income, housing, health, safety, and education are hard to achieve and maintain; and

Whereas, foster and homeless youth face educational challenges to complete on-time grade level progression and graduation as well as be college- and career-ready because they face significant hurdles such as access to transportation, adequate food, educational supports, consolidating credit for work completed between schools and consistent advice from academic counselors.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA will support public policy that advocates for all foster and homeless youth to receive the timely supports needed to prevent and break the cycle of homelessness; to protect their right to a healthy, safe and crisis-free environment; to provide the legally required support of removing all barriers to on-time grade level progression and graduation (transportation, credit consolidation, access to counselors, effective measurement of academic progress, etc.) so that graduation rates can meet or exceed the state graduation rates with a meaningful path to career success; and to continue to ensure the provisions of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 are reducing homelessness equitability while increasing access to education; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA provide voice, advocacy and resources to legislators, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Children, Youth and Families, Indian Child Welfare, school districts, schools, local PTAs and councils, parents, teachers, partner organizations, and other relevant groups to further the awareness and action to improve outcomes for foster and homeless youth; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA encourages councils and local PTAs to review school policies to ensure adherence to the laws providing protection and access to education for foster and homeless youth while partnering with school districts, parents, government organizations, partner organizations and other relevant groups to bring awareness and implement solutions through advocacy and family engagement programs.