

Fostering Educational Success: Reconnecting Families, Empowering Youth (FES)

The Academy for Child and Family Well Being and partnering organizations ([REDACTED] University of Nebraska Medical Center, and surrounding school districts) propose *FES* for the EIR Early-Phase competition. Designed to promote the educational outcomes of high-needs middle and high school students reunifying with their families following placements in foster care, *FES* addresses Absolute Priorities 1 and 2. Over the five-year project, we anticipate a minimum of 356 student participants, 356 caregivers, and 356 teachers across the four-phase development (focus groups, interviews, iterative pilot studies, advisory board feedback) and evaluation (randomized controlled trial) studies. Students served in the foster care system are high-needs due to their elevated rates of school mobility, poor academic achievement, retention, expulsion, and dropout. *FES* will be a modification of On the Way Home (OTWH), an evidence-based aftercare model designed to promote school success in reunifying students served in therapeutic residential care. Funded through two previous DOE grants, OTWH was developed and evaluated in 47 districts and 136 schools in the Midwest. Given its evidence of efficacy, *FES* will maintain the core educational supports (i.e., drop-out prevention, parent training and engagement, and homework support) used in OTWH, but will be refined and developed to meet the individualized educational needs of 6th-12th grade students involved in the foster care system. Developed through an iterative process to promote program sustainability, project goals include: (1) develop and adapt existing program components and measures to address the needs of students exiting foster care; (2) pilot-test for feasibility, acceptability, and further refinement; and (3) evaluate *FES* on student educational engagement and stability through a three-year RCT. Primary outcomes include discharge and six-month follow-up evaluations of student educational stability, engagement, and functioning as well as indicators of family functioning and empowerment, implementation fidelity, social validity, and *FES* costs.