

FOSTER CARE DATA EXCHANGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES: California



Students in foster care¹

32,359



Graduation rate

56% students in foster care

84% students not in foster care



Academic achievement

	Students in foster care	Students not in foster care
Meeting or exceeding academic standard		
Reading/language arts	24%	51%
Mathematics	15%	40%



Chronic absenteeism rate:

34.5% students in foster care

14.1% students not in foster care

Data Exchange at a Glance

Formal agreement² established between SEA and CWA:
Yes, in 2016

Frequency of data exchange:
Weekly/Annually

Direction of exchange:³
Bidirectional between SEA and CWA and from SEA to LEAs



Data categories shared:
Demographic, education, and welfare service information

Data Exchange Process

The California data-sharing agreement is between the California Department of Education as the State educational agency (SEA) and the California Department of Social Services as the child welfare agency (CWA). The data-sharing agreement was created in 2016 to support the calculation of the local control funding formula.⁴

The CWA shares data with the SEA weekly, and the process includes the following steps:



The CWA prepares the data. The CWA maintains the Child Welfare System/Case Management System, which contains information about children in foster care.



The CWA shares data with the SEA. The system sends data to the SEA using a secure file transfer protocol site. The SEA receives the CWA data and merges the data with the SEA data from the California Longitudinal Pupil Data System. The merge consists of a matching process based on name and date of birth of each child.



The SEA shares data with local educational agencies (LEAs). The exchanged data are made available to LEAs and schools, but the data are not actively shared with them. LEA and school staff must log into a State data system to retrieve the information about students in foster care and integrate the data into their local data systems.

Additionally, the SEA Analysis, Measurement, and Accountability Reporting Division shares merged data with the CWA once a year.

Drivers of Success

Some key facilitators that support the implementation of California’s data-sharing agreement include:

1. An SEA-funded foster data liaison facilitates the data exchange by working with both the program staff and the data collection and analysis staff.
 2. An umbrella memorandum of understanding (MOU) allows for quick changes to the data-sharing process as needed, such as when the State changes its definition of “foster care youth.”
 3. The use of the statewide CALPADS database, which contains high-quality data on student enrollment.
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Future Opportunities

Several opportunities related to the implementation of the data-sharing agreement include:

1. Creating a linked database between the SEA and the CWA.
 2. Ensuring timely updates to the CWA data (i.e., currently changes to individual foster care records can be added up to two weeks later).
 3. Using a consistent definition of foster care between the SEA and the CWA.
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Notes

¹The number of students in foster care and graduation rates are based on 2020–2021 school year data, and assessment results are based on the 2018–2019 school year data for all grades, available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/fosteryouth.asp>.

² An MOU or other formal agreement.

³ Data in the exchange can flow from one agency to another or be bi-directional.

⁴ More information about California’s Local Control Funding Formula can be found at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/>.

Additional Information

Data provided by the CWA to the SEA:

- name of student
- date of birth of student
- foster ID (10-digit)
- case start date
- gender
- case ID (19-digit)
- placement state date
- placement end date
- enrollment start and end date
- social worker name and phone number
- foster care indicator
- district code
- district name
- placement county
- school code
- school name
- whether parental rights are limited (Y/N)
- responsible agency (Child Welfare or Probation)
- placement address, city, and zip code
- appointed educational representative and phone number
- an indication of whether the student is under the placement and care of a CWA and removed from the home through a voluntary placement agreement

Data provided by the SEA to the CWA:

- name of student
- date of birth of student
- gender
- school district code
- school district name
- school code
- school name
- enrollment start date
- enrollment end date
- enrollment
- attendance
- program participation
- school discipline
- high school completion

FOR MORE INFORMATION about students in foster care, please visit:

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education:

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/students-foster-care/>

California Department of Education:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/fosteryouth.asp>

DataQuest

<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

California Department of Social Services:

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care>

California Foster Care Youth Services:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/>

California Child Welfare Indicators Project:

<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PIT/MTSG/r/ab636/s>



The State snapshot is developed based on publicly available information and information provided by the State.