

EMPIRE STATE

Making a college degree a realistic goal

Statewide alliance seeks more aid for kids lacking family support

By Brittany Horn

Only one in five children in foster care will attend college and between 2 and 7 percent of those will graduate, according to Fostering Youth Success Alliance.

For this reason, the group is fighting for a path to success for college-age youths in foster care.

The alliance, made up of 17 community-based organizations from around the state, is pushing for more aid to children once entrusted to the state for better care, said Lauren Tobias, director of policy at the Schuyler Center and a member of the alliance's steering committee.

Though exact details on the group's proposal are not yet available, plans include approaching the governor and Legislature about filling the holes that state aid often leaves for students without family

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*Lauren Tobias,
Fostering Youth Success Alliance-New York*

support when paying for college costs such as textbooks and housing.

"The absence of family supports has substantial repercussions as teens approach adulthood and independence, especially with regard to their decisions about higher education and career opportunities," Tobias said.

The alliance plans to release its full proposal early next week, but is focusing on making the journey to a college degree and career simpler for students lacking resources.

Tobias said many children grow up with the expectation that they will attend a two- or four-year college, but those in foster care may not think they have the chance.

Also, where to go on holiday breaks and summer vacation can make attending a university even more stressful than not going at all, Tobias said.

"In reality, they face challenges that are unique to them," Tobias said, "and we think that New York is part of our collective response as a state that's determined that children are better off with the state than with their own families."

Capital Region children in foster care

Albany: 158 children in foster care; 14 are 18 and older or "college age"

Rensselaer: 157 children in foster care; 13 are college age

Schenectady: 226 children in foster care; 31 are college age

Saratoga: 58 children in foster care; six are college age

Source: Fostering Youth Success Alliance