

Northern Region Community Collaborative Notes

09/20/2017

Total Number of Attendees: 16

Number of Students: 2 students from NMC

Attendee Affiliation: 2 from MYOI, 1 from DHHS, 3 post-secondary staff, 1 from a community organization, 1 high school/middle school educator, 1 from career services, 2 k-12 educators, and 1 funder

Notes

FSM Welcome: Maddy Day, FSM Updates and FSM Champion Challenge

- FSM Community Collaboratives: These events take place so that FSM network participants in different regions can network with each other and increase knowledge of resources and best practices in each domain. It's not just what you know but also who you know!
- Take the FSM Champion Challenge: FSM's theme for the year is **#FSMBeTheChampion**, and we want to hear how network partners are acting as champions for students with experience in foster care. What does it mean to be a champion for youth with experience in foster care? Fill out a champion poster; write name on a sheet of paper; a name will be drawn at the end of each month for a prize.
- FSM Community Collaboratives: Participants can complete an evaluation survey to give feedback on Community Collaborative manually or on their phones via Twitter and Facebook.

FSM Policy Update

- ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act): Replaced No Child Left Behind. The education sector is mandated to provide positions that support individuals with experience in foster care and identify foster care liaisons, which are a valuable part of our network. What resources and common challenges exist for students in each school?
- Maddy, Kathleen Hoehne, Foster Care Consultant, Office of Field Services at the Michigan Department of Education, and Ann Rossi, Education Analyst for Education and Youth Services at the MDHHS, are putting together resources about college access and college success related to the Every Student Succeeds Act. FSM has a toolkit that contains resources and information about ESSA: <http://fostersuccessmichigan.com/library/essa-toolkit> as well as a webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7zMAIcyOXQ&feature=youtu.be> .
- FSM has extensive information and resources related to youth with experience in foster care contained in the [Getting To Know... guide series](#) and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FosteringSuccessMichigan/>.
- The [financial aid resource guide](#) has a step-by-step process for financial aid eligibility. Young people still aren't having all of their needs met. Fostering Futures Scholarship doesn't have an upper age limit as students just need to be in foster care

on or after their 13th birthday for 1 day. Tuition scholarships are also available. Federal grants are available for students with experience in foster care.

- FSM offers webinars on an array of different topics related to youth with experience in foster care.
(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1fquNbzARNROhv2qIxLIIA/videos?sort=d&shelf_id=0&view=0), including financial aid (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8pECp5eXs0&t=2s>). We have toolkits as well (http://fostersuccessmichigan.com/search?collection=resources|network&search_mode=all&keywords=toolkit).
- More about ESSA: Helps us to track student success. In 2019, we will have 1st report showing outcomes of students in foster care in K through 12. Information gathered will include graduation and persistence rates. The more that we know, the better we can support students.

Life Domain Passport Activity

- Summary: The FSM Life Domain Passport Activity allows each region to identify resources and existing resource gaps in each region. Participants are given a sheet with spaces that represent the 7 Life Domains (<http://files.constantcontact.com/460ca9c2201/0ab81644-1dc6-47b6-bc57-4cf2fb3d2d16.pdf>). Participants network with other attendees to meet and identify expertise in each of the life domains based on their role in the work (such as if they work in housing services). Names and contact information are written in the space provided. If a region does not have resources or people to contact in a specific domain, we can learn who's missing in our network.
- Takeaways:
 - So much expertise is in the room, that when leveraged creates a "holistic network".
 - New campus support program at Grand Valley State University
 - Grand Rapids Community Foundation awards a scholarship for youth with experience in foster care (will put information on the FSM website).
 - Make sure to include young people with experience in foster care in your network. If we're serving them, they also need to hear what peers have to say.
 - Five programs were in Michigan before FSM was created. Now there are 16 programs that represent 17 institutions, and FSM has identified professionals at 66 college campuses.
 - We needed bridges between education, child welfare, etc. This is where FSM came from as we learn from network what gaps are and then go out to try to assist or make resources. It can be something as small as who to contact.
 - MYOI: Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative. Its purpose is to improve the life skills of those currently or formerly in foster care (ages 14 to 26). MYOI also helps with money-related issues and can pass internship and other information on to students.
 - Education is part of what leads to careers so education and careers work together.

FSM Panel Discussion Highlights/Themes:

View the Full Recording at <https://www.facebook.com/FosteringSuccessMichigan/>

Panel members: Susie Greenfelder, MDHHS; Janette Ward, Ferris Youth Initiative; Kiera P., student; Adeline D., student

How does the education domain influence your work/life?

- ***Student Centered Support for students is essential.***
 - I am “aware of” and looking to help with students’ needs.
 - I get to “help them get the information that they want.” I feel excited to work with these students.
- ***Education provides new opportunities***
 - Education is not always a priority while in foster care, but it will create opportunities.

What challenges have you encountered related to this domain, and how have you resolved them?

- ***Stress is a great challenge for youth with experience in foster care.***
 - Stress associated with meeting deadlines, filling out paperwork, and adjusting.
 - Stress isn’t just from going to class but also time management.
 - Stress from obstacles in other life domains, for example, problems in mental health or housing impact this domain.
- ***We need to learn about the experiences of youth, have conversations, and know who to go to for help with helping students.***
 - I go to financial aid and admissions with students, find resources, and find paperwork that they require. In some offices, these students don’t fit.
- ***Advocacy is important and we need to start advocating by learning where students are at and how systems are functioning.***
 - Sometimes the system dysfunctions. It’s important to contact students early so that they know what they need to do or meet criteria to enter college. They may not know everything that’s necessary to do to go to college.
 - Systems change. We need to learn about systems to learn how to change them, and if we don’t advocate, the student might encounter problems later.

Questions for Students

What do you wish other professionals and supporters knew and understood while assisting in this life domain?

- ***Professionals need to be persistent and understanding.***
 - We already have lots of paperwork so it’s challenging to find time to fill out more paperwork that we don’t necessarily understand. Professionals need to be persistent and ask if we don’t understand. We want professionals to know that we appreciate their efforts!

- ***It's important to check in, not just check up.***
 - A check in is more personal and about asking for an update about how the student is doing.

Please share a skill or a strength you have gained from your foster care experience that helps you in this domain.

- ***Perseverance and Self-Accountability***
 - If I wanted to do something, I had to do it myself.
- ***Interdependence***
 - I gained the “ability to know that life does get better.” I learned that people will help and how to let them help me.

Audience Questions

What happened that helped motivate you as a student

- ***“Hearing that I could succeed”...***
 - Receiving support from my foster parent and other people that told me I could succeed. I learned that what I had heard earlier about not being able to accomplish much was untrue.

What helped you, and where did you find gaps with how to be on track with peers?

- ***“Self-Advocacy”***
 - In high school I had to advocate for myself...
- ***Socialization and transitions***
 - Socialization helps with making it so transferring to new schools doesn’t affect us so much.
 - We need to make the transition okay for ourselves first before we can advocate for others.
- ***Understanding students’ needs when transitioning to a classroom***
 - Many high schools use online learning for students, which can make it difficult when colleges require students to be in class. This creates a more difficult transition to college for students.

Have all of your college costs been met, or is there still a gap? Have you looked for additional funding?

- ***Scholarships and grants***
 - I received a Pell Grant, a Commitment Scholarship, and a Fostering Futures Scholarship. I didn’t qualify for ETV but applied for private scholarships. I need time to apply, but when I have free time, I want to relax, too.
 - I didn’t have great grades and test scores so I wasn’t eligible for many scholarships or was too late to apply as I decided late to go to college. I received ETV, the Pell Grant, and got help from DHHS. I got resources from others so college is paid off.
- ***Life circumstances and time management***

- Life circumstances might disqualify students from receiving scholarships. It's not just about academics but also time management. The education system is very complex. Ideally, students don't have all of these worries, but they only have so much time, which is taken away because they are working in distinct systems. Is financial aid meeting their needs? Students need to work on skill development, so we need to make paid (not free) internships.

Group Discussion Highlights:

- ***Even if students do not qualify for a campus based support program, staff can act as resources for them.*** We share information and help students to learn about other resources on campus. Understanding that there is ongoing support can get a student to want to go to college.
- Often when students are in high school, they don't have leadership or volunteer opportunities. We need to try to keep students in school and in a "stable" place. We need to have others know who the students are as those opportunities are what's needed to get some scholarships. ***We need to prepare students early.***
- ***As a student, people telling me that I can do it and knowing that people will "fight for" me helped a lot.***
- ***Make the students' needs and identity become priorities.*** We don't want to define these students as being from foster care.
- ***Building relationships with students is most important*** as these relationships help us to know their needs and provide opportunities and resources.
- Many campus support programs have a mentoring component. We want students to be able to state what they want and have someone to go to for help. ***Mentors provide resources.***

Next Steps, Takeaways, and Resource Sharing

The main themes that emerged during our first FSM community collaborative related to the resilience and humility students with experience in foster care develop. Our panelists identified how they were resilient by understanding the imperfect system they were involved in and by using all of the available networks and resources to better their outcomes. The students shared awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses and openness to receive and give assistance by sharing the value of networking and connections. Cultural humility and "self-check-in" were also factors in their success in this life domain. They were aware that their experiences were unique and valuable, however, they also understood and respected that they do not know everything and were open to ask questions for clarification to best serve and understand themselves and others.