

# RESEARCH BRIEF



Office of Research, Assessment, Data, Accountability, and Reporting



## Key Data Points for Students Experiencing Foster Placement

### Background

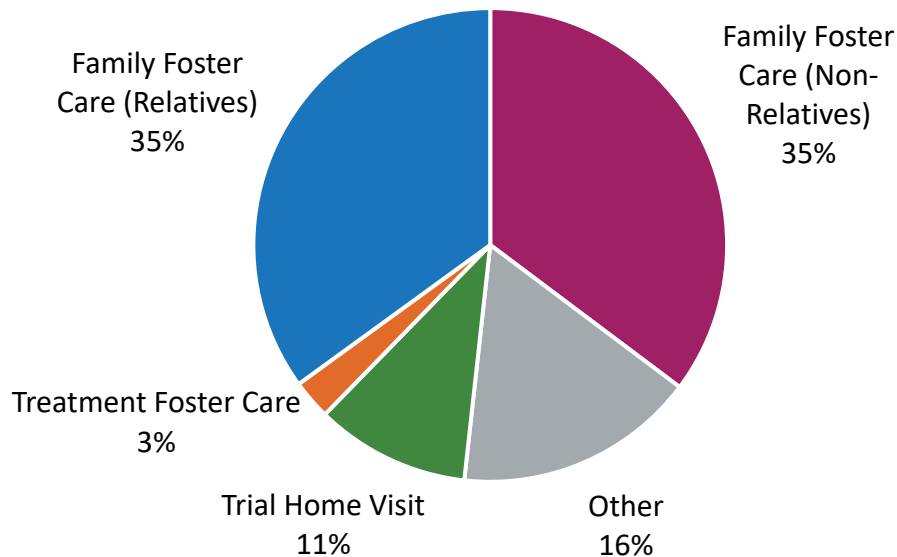
Oregon foster care data is collected by the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and includes children ages 0-18 who are residents of Oregon and were removed from their families due to abuse, neglect, other otherwise unsafe home environments, and placed in foster care for any length of time. Placement sites include in- or out-of-state homes of relatives, foster families, group homes, residential programs/facilities, and, in rare cases, juvenile detention facilities and motels. ODHS foster care data does not include children served by Tribal Foster Care programs or Oregon Child Welfare in-home services.

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015<sup>1</sup> mandates that State Education Agencies include students in foster care as part of annual Accountability reporting. To comply with this requirement, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) initiated a foster care data sharing agreement with ODHS and began to publish data on students in foster care during the 2020-21 school year. In the 2023-24 school year, 12,276 students were enrolled on May 1<sup>st</sup> who had ever experienced foster care placement, constituting 2.3% of Oregon's student population.

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<sup>1</sup> [Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1111. \(2015\)](#)

**Figure 1: Average Daily Foster Care Placements in 2023<sup>2</sup>**



In 2023, 20.5% of Child Protective Services (CPS) assessments were founded for abuse, and 17.8% of the children involved in founded assessments were removed from their homes. The most common family stress factor when abuse was present was parent or caregiver substance use, followed by domestic violence. These are also important factors preceding student houselessness.<sup>3</sup> The majority of child abuse reports are made by mandated reporters, including school officials.

Students with new or ongoing foster care placements represent fewer than one percent of Oregon students each year, and although enrollment numbers for all students have declined since 2020-21, the percentage of those students who are experiencing foster placement has also declined year-over-year. For this reason, although students in foster care are included in 'All Students' statistics later in this paper, excluding them from the 'All Students' group would have limited effect on 'All Students' percentages. Declines in the percentage of students experiencing foster placement are consistent with overall declines in the foster care population, with fewer children of any age entering foster care in each year from 2018 through 2023.

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<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 and statistics on Child Protective Services assessments and reporting retrieved from the [Oregon Department of Human Services 2023 Child Welfare Data Book](#).

<sup>3</sup> Bevers, J., George, T., and Jacoby, I. (2024) [Understanding the Formal Identification of Houselessness as a Culmination of Stressors](#). Oregon Department of Education Data Brief, Office of Education Innovation and Improvement.

**Table 1: Enrollment Numbers for All Students and Students in Foster Care, 2020-21 through 2023-24 School Years**

School Year	Total Students	Students in Foster Care	Percent Students in Foster Care
2020-21	557,223	4,248	0.76%
2021-22	546,238	3,530	0.65%
2022-23	545,140	3,238	0.59%
2023-24	542,271	3,174	0.58%

The transition in early 2020 to comprehensive distance learning resulted in a large decrease in school-related referrals and other hotline calls to child welfare, but most schools returned to hybrid or fully in-person status by May 2021, following the Governor’s order.<sup>4</sup> As a result, while abuse/neglect reports declined in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, they returned to baseline levels in 2021.<sup>5</sup> The continued decline in the percentage of students experiencing foster placement since the return to in-person education is likely due in large part to policy changes at ODHS that emphasize family preservation through prevention, increased access to support, and in-home care, including pilots of Family Preservation Demonstration sites in seven Oregon counties.<sup>6</sup> These changes were bolstered in 2018 through the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which altered federal funding for child welfare to include evidence-based prevention services and reduce placements in congregate care settings.<sup>7</sup> Changes to how the hotline processed and responded to calls have likely impacted these data as well.<sup>8</sup>

## Student Demographics

### Foster Student Race/Ethnicity

ODE reports race and ethnicity according to federal guidelines, which require that any student who identifies as Hispanic/Latino is reported exclusively as a member of that group, regardless of other intersecting identities. For all other groups, students who report identifying with more than a single racial or ethnic group are exclusively reported as Multiracial. For this reason, reporting for other student groups does not fully capture the number of students who may identify as belonging to those groups.

Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of students in foster care as compared to the overall Oregon student population by federally reported race/ethnicity. It shows that, compared to all Oregon students, students in foster care are roughly four times as likely to be American Indian/Alaska Native and twice as likely to be Black/African American compared to students overall, and slightly disproportionately likely to identify as Multiracial or White. These trends are consistent

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<sup>4</sup> See the Oregon Department of Education report [Falling Enrollment During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for more details.

<sup>5</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services/Oregon Health Authority. [COVID-19 Pandemic Effects on Services for Children and Young Adults](#).

<sup>6</sup> See the [Oregon Department of Human Services Family Preservation Website](#) for additional information.

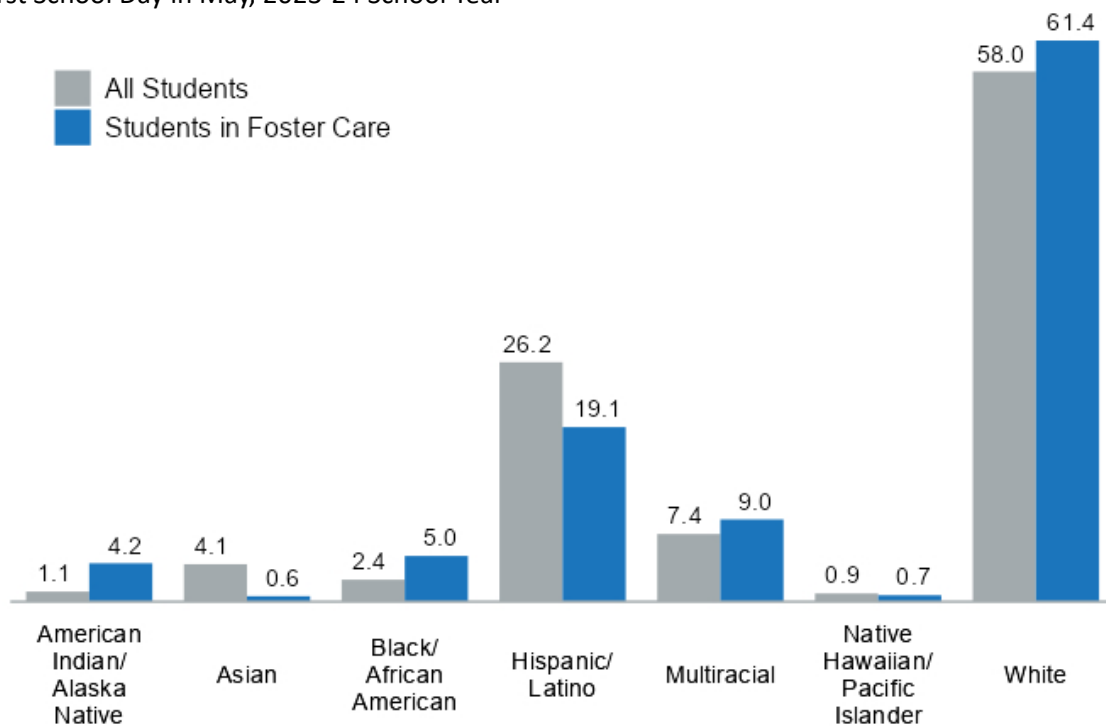
<sup>7</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services. [Presentation on Family Preservation, January 25, 2023](#).

<sup>8</sup> See Oregon Department of Human Services [2023 Oregon Child Abuse Hotline Annual Report](#), p.4 for additional information.

with all earlier reporting years for which foster data are available, as well as with ODHS statistics on the overall population of children in foster care.

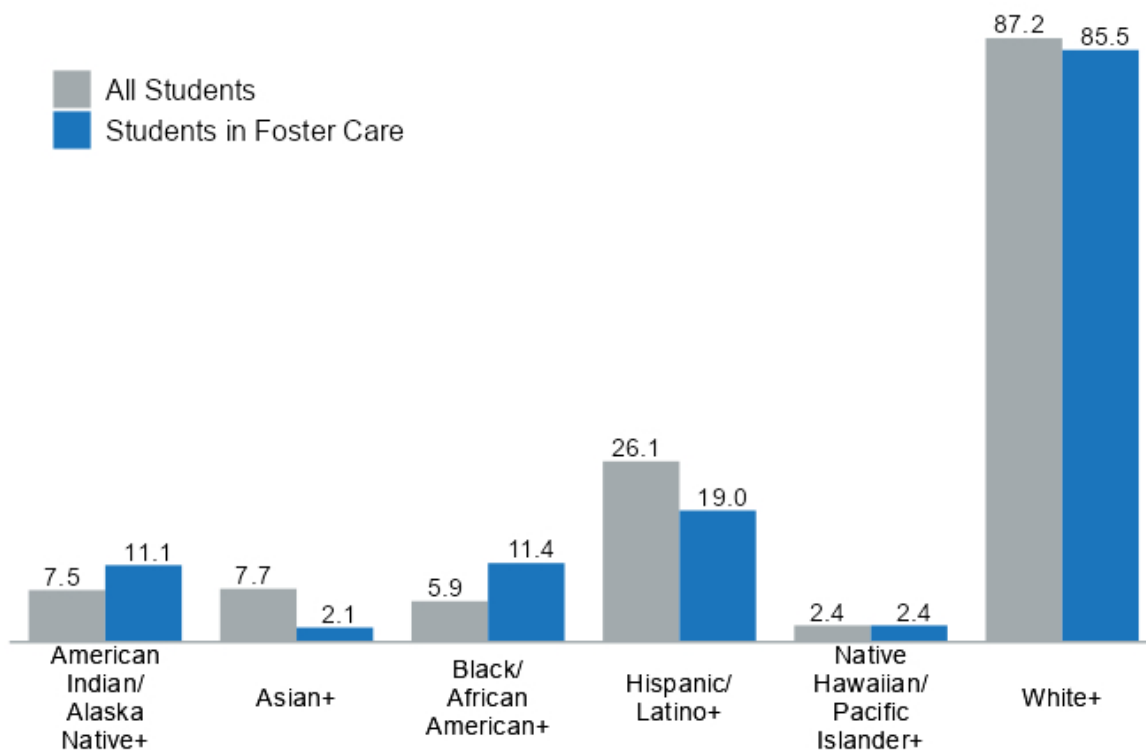
**Figure 2: American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Multiracial, and White Students Are Disproportionately Represented in Foster Care**

Percent of Students in each Racial/Ethnic Group, Mutually Exclusive Groups  
First School Day in May, 2023-24 School Year



In addition to meeting federal reporting requirements, ODE has begun to report a more expansive view of race and ethnicity that includes any race or ethnicity that a student's family identifies as belonging to. Examining foster student data from this lens continues to show disproportionately large representation of students who identify as either American Indian/Alaska Native or Black/African American. Students who identify as Asian or Hispanic/Latino have much lower instances of foster care placement than their overall representation among Oregon students.

**Figure 3: Students who Identify as American Indian/Alaska Native+ or as Black/African American+ Are Disproportionately Represented in Foster Care Compared to Other + Groups**  
Percent of Students Who Selected Each Racial/Ethnic Indicator, with Overlaps  
First School Day in May, 2023-24 School Year



Note: Students may identify more than one [racial/ethnic indicator](#); therefore, results above sum to greater than 100%.

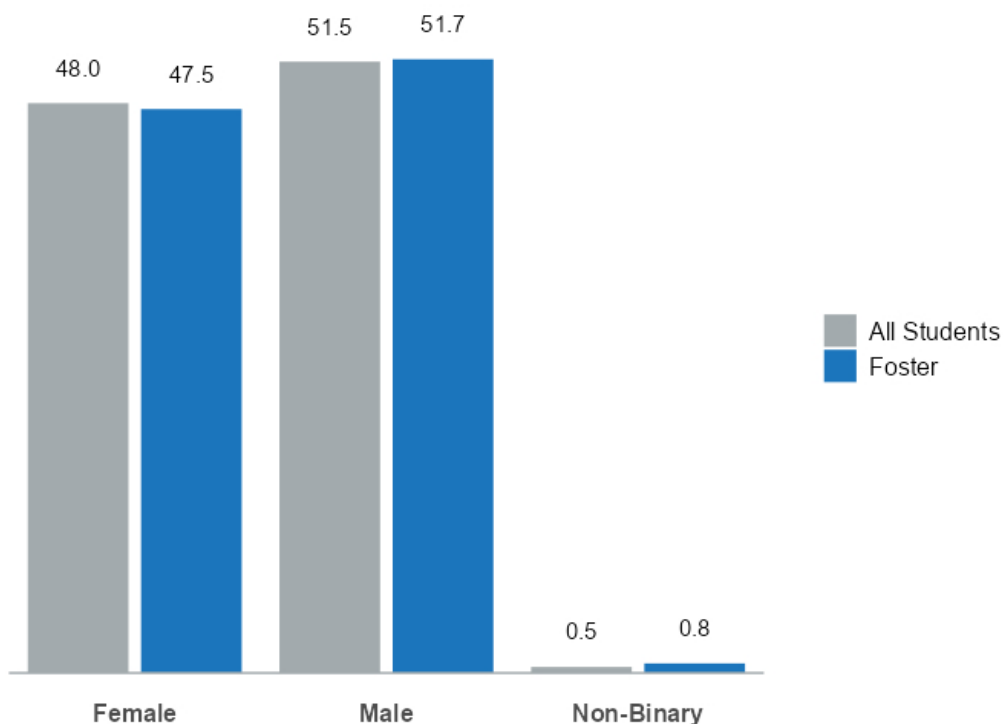
## Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

ODE does not collect data on student sexual orientation or gender identity, but does report officially recorded gender/sex marker.<sup>9</sup> Students also have the opportunity to anonymously indicate sexual orientation and gender identity in the [Oregon Student Health Survey](#). ODE data, presented in Figure 4, suggests that students in foster care are slightly more likely than their peers to identify as non-binary.

<sup>9</sup> [Supporting Gender Expansive Students: Guidance for Schools](#) (2023), Oregon Department of Education. Appendix A: Terminology: "Legal Sex/Gender Marker: A legal and medical designation of assigned sex/gender, most often as male (M) or female (F) based on the gender binary, leaving out or misrepresenting intersex (X) and gender expansive individuals. In Oregon, all students and school staff have the right to designate Male (M), Female (F), or Nonbinary (X) on their records, which recognizes some identities beyond the binary and correlates with the sex designations allowable on Oregon birth certificates and driver's licenses [...] Not all gender expansive individuals change their legal gender/sex marker to align with their gender identities for various reasons including personal safety and social or familial support."

**Figure 4: Non-Binary Students are Slightly Overrepresented in Foster Care**

Fall Enrollment Data, First School Day in October, 2023-24 School Year



Responses to the Oregon Student Health Survey (Table 2) provide an even more detailed insight, and strongly indicate that students who have been placed in foster care are much more likely than their peers to identify as LGBTQ2SIA+. This is consistent with national trends<sup>10</sup> and with ODE data on long-term care and treatment facility placements, which also serve a disproportionately high number of LGBTQ2SIA+ students. While many LGBTQ2SIA+ youth enter the child welfare system for the same reasons as non-LGBTQ2SIA+ youth, a national study shows that 44% of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth in state custody report they were removed, ran away, or were thrown out of their home for reasons directly related to their identity.<sup>11</sup> More information about supporting this population is available at the end of this brief.

<sup>10</sup> The Human Rights Campaign. [LGBTQ+ Youth in the Foster Care System](#). Accessed January 09, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Painter, K. R., Scannapieco, M., Blau, G., Andre, A., & Kohn, K. (2018). Improving the mental health outcomes of LGBTQ youth and young adults: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 44(2), 223-235. and Children's Rights. [LGBTQ+ Youth In Foster Care Fact Sheet January 2023](#)

**Table 2: Student Health Survey Results Show that Students in Foster Care are Much More Likely to Self-Identify as LGBTQ2SIA+<sup>12</sup>**

Oregon Student Health Survey Statewide Outcomes (2022)		
All LGBTQ2SIA+ Youth (2022)	Houseless LGBTQ2SIA+ Youth	Youth Ever Placed in Foster Care who are LGBTQ2SIA+
<p>About 12% of Oregon youth are transgender, gender expansive, or unsure of their gender identity.</p> <p>[11% of 6th graders; 12% of 8th graders; 11% of 11th graders]</p>	<p>About 23% of houseless Oregon youth are transgender, gender expansive, or unsure of their gender identity.</p> <p>[23% of 6th graders; 22% of 8th graders; 23% of 11th graders]</p>	<p>About 21% of Oregon youth ever placed in foster care are transgender, gender expansive, or unsure of their gender identity.</p> <p>[28% of 6th graders; 22% of 8th graders; 15% of 11th graders]</p>
<p>Almost 1 in 3 [29%] Oregon youth identify as LGBTQ, pan, ace, aro, something else, not sure, or multiple orientations.</p> <p>[30% of 6th graders; 27% of 8th graders; 30% of 11th graders]</p>	<p>Over 1 in 3 [36%] houseless Oregon youth identify as LGBTQ, pan, ace, aro, something else, not sure, or multiple orientations.</p> <p>[34% of 6th graders; 35% of 8th graders; 42% of 11th graders]</p>	<p>Roughly 2 in 5 [40%] Oregon youth ever placed in foster care identify as LGBTQ, pan, ace, aro, something else, not sure, or multiple orientations.</p> <p>[39% of 6th graders; 41% of 8th graders; 40% of 11th graders]</p>

## Grade Distribution

Students experience foster placement across all age groups; however, placement rate appears to slightly peak at two points during K-12 education. Placement rates are highest among very young children (kindergarteners and first graders) and then decline through sixth grade. Placement rates begin to climb again during middle school and peak in early to mid-high school. These rates are consistent with child welfare data, which show that the majority of child abuse victims are very young, likely due to increased vulnerability and reduced ability to maintain safety, and rates generally decline with age, with a small increase around age 13.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [Oregon Student Health Survey](#), Oregon Health Authority.

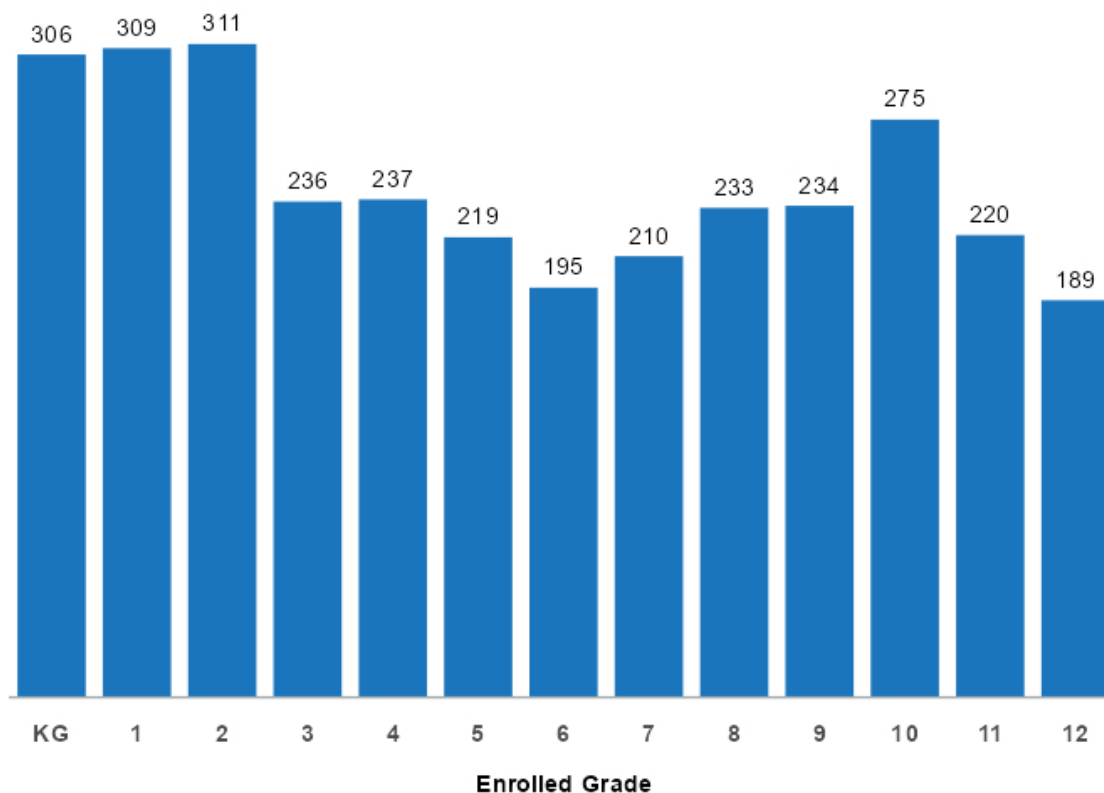
<sup>13</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services. [2022 Child Welfare Data Book](#), p.6.

Figure 5 presents grade distributions for students in foster care for the 2023-24 school year. While these placement peaks are not identical to prior years (for example, the second placement peak for the 2022-23 school year took place in the ninth grade), overall trends of higher placement rates for early grades that decline until middle school and then begin to increase to a second (lower) peak are consistent across school years from 2020-21 through 2023-24. The secondary peak tended to move forward by one grade per year across time (for example, the second peak for 2021-22 occurred in eighth grade and moved to ninth in 2022-23). This peak may indicate a cohort effect for this particular group. Across all years, third or fourth through sixth grade students have the lowest placement rates of any age group.

Two key findings emerge from longitudinal grade distribution analysis. First, large placement peaks in early childhood and secondary peaks in middle through high school suggest that additional resource allocation in early elementary school and eighth through tenth grade may benefit a large proportion of students in foster care. Second, special care should be given to ensuring service continuity for students who experience placements that span multiple school years. This may be especially critical during the transition from middle school to high school when larger numbers of students are experiencing placement and are also at a time when they may be changing schools, potentially leading to increased risk for support discontinuity.

**Figure 5: Early Childhood and High School-Aged Students May be More Vulnerable to Foster Placement**

Foster Student Enrollment by Grade, 2023-24 School Year

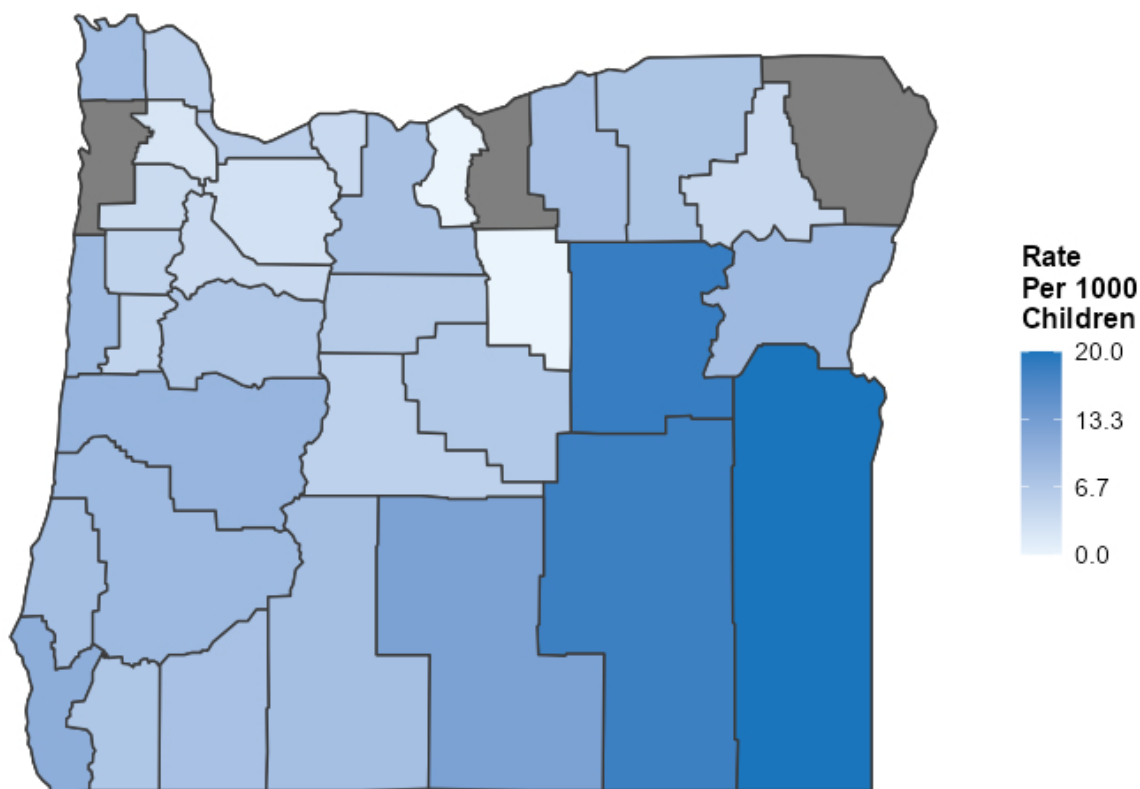




## Geographic Distribution

In 2023, children experienced foster placement in 31 of the 33 Oregon counties for which ODHS reported foster data. While the largest number of children experienced placement in Multnomah County (817 in foster care on September 30, 2023), the rate of placement in Oregon counties is highly disproportionate, especially in Eastern Oregon and coastal counties. In comparison to Multnomah County's rate of 5.6 children placed per 1,000, Malheur County had a placement rate of 20.0 and Grant County saw a rate of 18.6 per 1,000. Other counties with placement rates of greater than 10 per 1,000 include Harney County (18.2), Lake County (12.5), and Curry County (10.6). By contrast, of counties with more than 1,000 residents, the lowest rates of placement occurred in Washington County (2.2), Clackamas County (2.8), Yamhill County (3.7), Marion County (3.8), and Hood River County (3.9).

**Figure 6. Number of Oregon Children in Foster Care Per 1,000 Children, by County<sup>14,15</sup>**  
Point in Time, 09/30/2023



<sup>14</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services. [2023 Child Welfare Handbook](#), p. 34

<sup>15</sup> Counties in dark grey were not reported by ODHS.

## Special Education

Although reliable national statistics on the prevalence of special education for students in foster care are unavailable, researchers consistently estimate that special education rates are much higher for students in foster care than for students in general. Palmieri and La Salle (2017)<sup>16</sup> reported that students in foster care are “up to three and a half times more likely than their peers to receive special education services,” and Powers, et al (2012) point to several studies suggesting that roughly 30-40% of students in foster care are also in special education.<sup>17</sup> Gee (2020)<sup>18</sup> notes that children who experience abuse or neglect are exposed to stressors and environmental factors that can lead to neurological issues, behavioral disorders, emotional disturbances, developmental delays, and reduced social abilities, all of which may necessitate an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

ODE student records show that in Oregon, students who have experienced foster care placement are more than twice as likely to be identified for special education than students overall, a ratio which remains consistent across school years (see Figure 7). These students are also vulnerable to service discontinuity when they move to new schools or need new supports, and may experience potential disruptions due to delays in school notification about IEPs or confusion about guardianship.

*Despite laws protecting the right of students in foster care to remain in their school district of origin, these students experience much higher mobility than other students. In 2023-24, 60% of students in foster care were identified as mobile<sup>19</sup>, compared to only 12% of all students. Students in foster care also often have higher rates of mobility even outside of their foster care placements, which may impact these data.<sup>20</sup>*

To best support students in foster care with IEPs, it will be critical to more fully understand elements of how they are identified, including the timing of identification relative to foster placement, typical age of identification, the types of services that students in foster care are most likely to need, and where these services can be accessed throughout the state. In addition, it will be vital to strengthen the processes that ensure service continuity, and to develop

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<sup>16</sup> Palmieri, L. E., & La Salle, T. P. (2017). Supporting students in foster care. *Psychology in the Schools*, 54(2), 117-126.

<sup>17</sup> Powers, L. E., Geenen, S., Powers, J., Pommier-Satya, S., Turner, A., Dalton, L. D., Drummond, D., & Swank, P. (2012). [My Life: Effects of a longitudinal, randomized study of self-determination enhancement on the transition outcomes of youth in foster care and special education](#). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(11), 2179-2187.

<sup>18</sup> Gee, K. A. (2020). [Predictors of special education receipt among child welfare-involved youth](#). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 114, 105018.

<sup>19</sup> ODE defines a mobile student as a student who meets one or more of the following criteria:

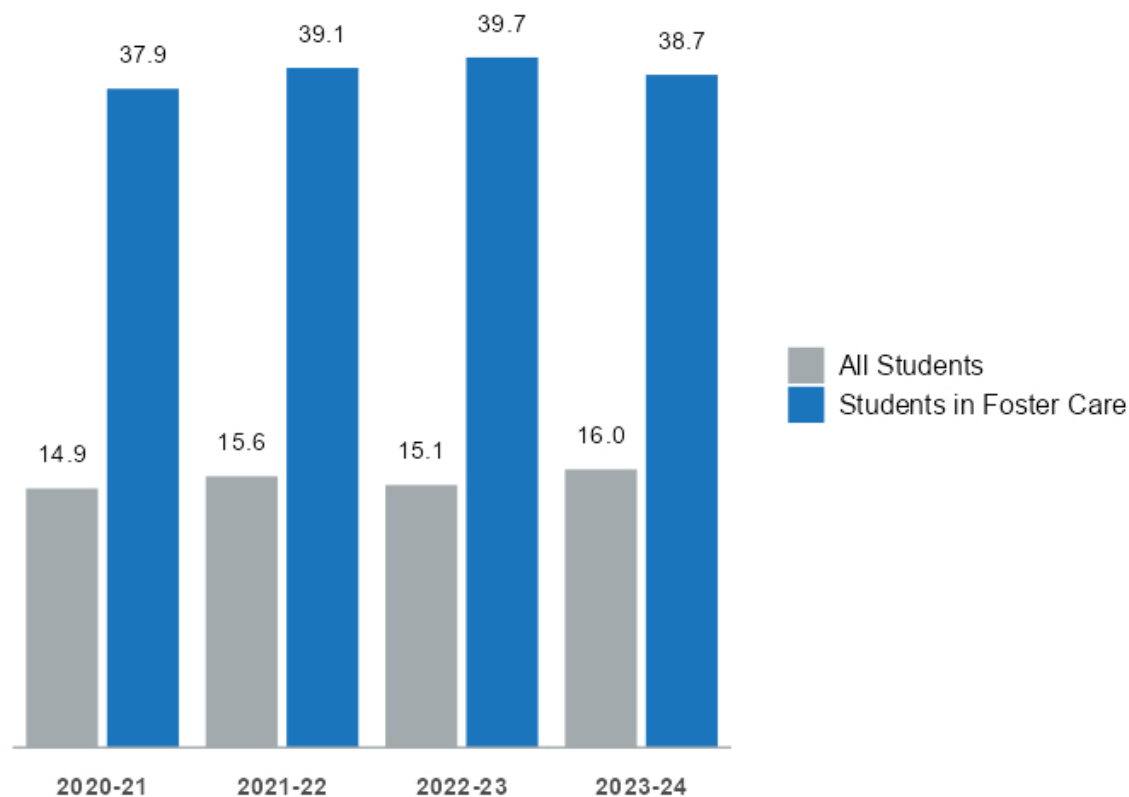
- First enrollment of the year occurred after the first school day in October
- Last enrollment ended before the first school day in May and the student did not graduate and was not deceased
- The student had an enrollment gap of at least ten days between two records for the same school during which they were not enrolled in any public Oregon K-12 institution and did not transfer to a private or out-of-state school
- The student had enrollments at more than one attending school

<sup>20</sup> Oregon Child Integrated Dataset. [Student Mobility for Youth in the Foster Care System](#).

strategies for effectively intervening to mitigate the effects of trauma due to child abuse, neglect, and family separation. While having clearer answers to questions of how students are identified will help to better target services, existing data make clear that an essential element of any efforts to support students in foster care must include a significant focus of resources dedicated to supporting students in special education.

**Figure 7: Students in Foster Care are Much More Likely to Have Been Identified for Special Education Services**

Percentages of Students in Special Education, 2020-21 through 2023-24 School Years



## Academic Indicators

This section presents an overview of four academic indicators: Regular Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism, Ninth Grade On-Track to Graduate, Four-Year Graduation, and Five-Year Completion for students in foster care. Regular Attendance and Ninth Grade On-Track to Graduate both show metrics for students who experienced new or ongoing foster placement during the reported school year. Four-Year Graduation and Five-Year Completion include data for students who experienced new or ongoing foster placement at any point during high school.

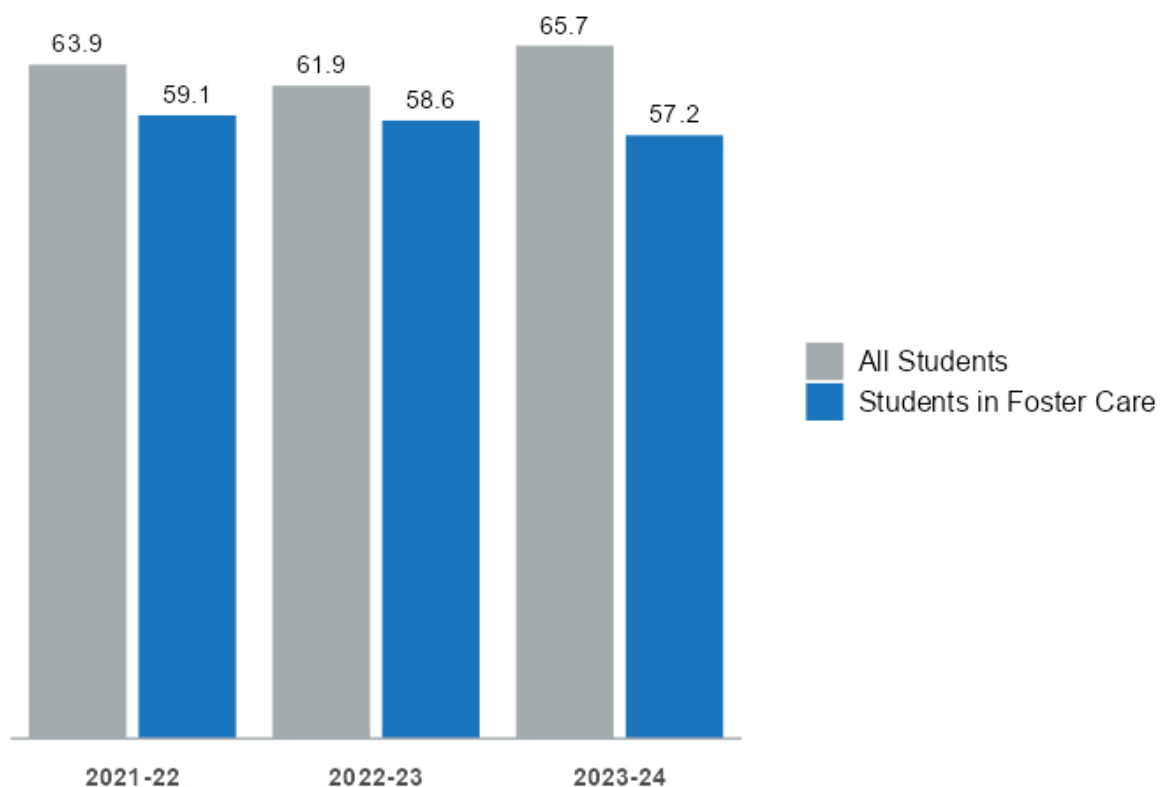
The school year for foster placement is calculated as beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ending on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year.<sup>21</sup>

## Regular Attendance

In the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, regular attendance rates (attendance on 90% or more of days during the school year) decreased across student groups, although rates began to improve in the 2023-24 school year<sup>22</sup>. Despite the overall improvement in 2023-24, however, Regular Attendance rates among students in foster care continued to decline, resulting in a broadening attendance gap between students in foster care and their peers.

**Figure 8: Students in Foster Care Have Lower Rates of Regular Attendance**

Percentages of Regularly Attending Students, 2020-21 through 2023-24 School Years



## Ninth Grade On-Track to Graduate

Ninth Grade On-Track to Graduate refers to the percentage of students who have earned at least one fourth of required credits by the end of their ninth grade year. On-Track rates for

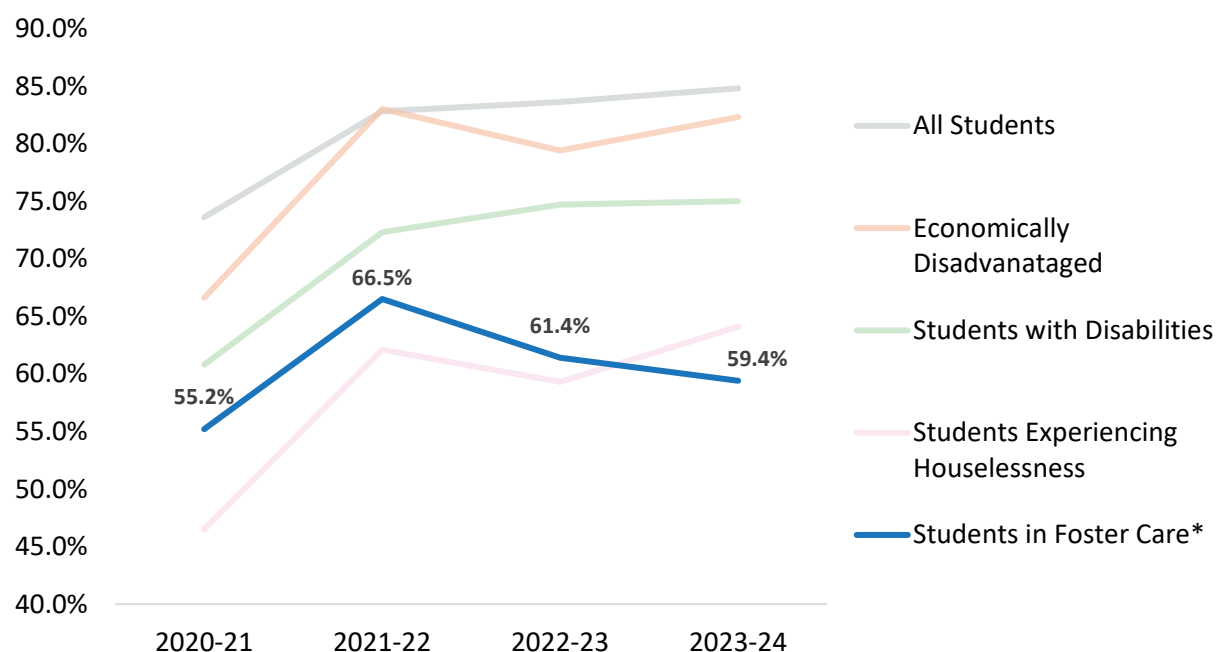
<sup>21</sup> This means that, for example, a student who experienced foster placement during their eighth grade year would also be flagged as experiencing foster placement in their ninth grade year if their placement ended at any point on or after July 1<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Regular Attendance calculations were adjusted for the 2020-21 school year due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, 2020-21 Regular Attendance data is not comparable to data from other school years and is not included here.

students who have experienced new or ongoing foster placement in their ninth grade year have been lower than for all other peer groups except for Students Experiencing Houselessness since reporting for students in foster care began in the 2020-21 school year. On-Track rates for students in foster care increased during the 2021-22 school year, but declined in 2022-23 and 2023-24, despite increasing On-Track rates for other focal student groups.

**Figure 9: 9th Grade Foster Care Tied to Lower On-Track Rates**

9th Grade On-Track Percentages by Demographic Group, 2020-21 through 2023-24



\* Students who experienced new or ongoing foster placement at any point between July 1 and June 30 of their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year

## Four-Year Graduation and Five-Year Completion

On time four-year graduation rates for students in foster care<sup>23</sup> steadily improved from 2019-20 through 2021-22, but declined in the most recent reporting year and have consistently remained below 50%, which is substantially lower than all other student groups. These trends persist for five-year graduation and for five-year completion (which includes GEDs, Adult High School Diplomas, and Extended Diplomas). Although rates of five-year completion and graduation are higher than four-year graduation rates, students in foster care also experience significantly worse outcomes than their peers in these categories (see Tables 4 and 5).

<sup>23</sup> Students are counted as “In Foster Care” if they experienced new or ongoing placement at any time during high school, including episodes that began before high school but ended on or after July 1<sup>st</sup> of their ninth grade year.

**Table 3: Students in Foster Care Have the Lowest Four-Year Graduation Rates of Any Student Group**  
On Time Graduation Rates by Student Group and Graduating Year, 2019-20 through 2022-23

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
All Students	82.6	80.6	81.3	81.3
Economically Disadvantaged	77.6	77.0	80.7	80.7
Special Education	68.0	66.1	67.5	68.6
Houseless	60.5	55.4	58.6	60.6
<b>In Foster Care</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>46.9</b>

**Table 4: Students in Foster Care Have the Lowest Five-Year Graduation Rates of Any Student Group**  
Five-Year Graduation Rates by Student Group and Graduating Year, 2019-20 through 2022-23

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
All Students	83.0	84.5	83.7	83.8
Economically Disadvantaged	78.5	79.9	80.9	83.3
Special Education	68.9	71.3	71.5	71.4
Houseless	61.5	63.5	61.4	63.4
<b>In Foster Care</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>53.7</b>	<b>53.4</b>

**Table 5: Students in Foster Care Have the Lowest Five-Year Completion Rates of Any Student Group**  
Five-Year Completion Rates by Student Group and Completion Year, 2019-20 through 2022-23

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
All Students	87.2	87.8	86.5	86.8
Economically Disadvantaged	83.7	83.8	83.9	86.3
Special Education	74.9	76.0	75.4	75.4
Houseless	68.8	69.7	66.5	68.6
<b>In Foster Care</b>	<b>64.3</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>63.0</b>	<b>60.1</b>

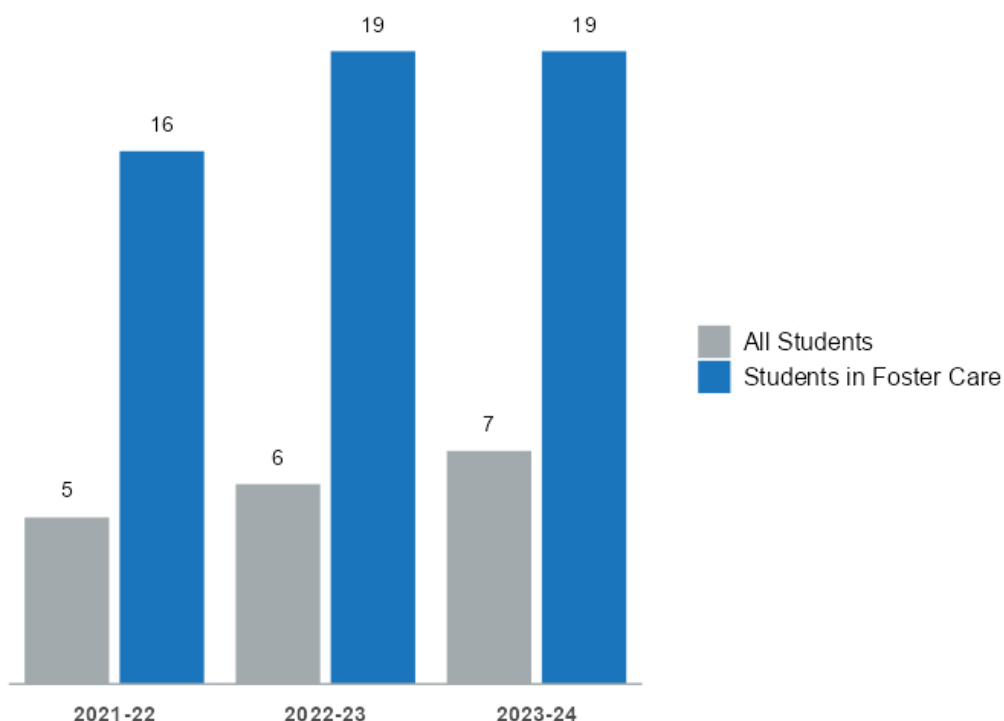
## Students in Foster Care: Separation from Peers and Houselessness

Students in foster care are more likely than their peers to be suspended or expelled, to attend alternative high schools, or to be currently or formerly incarcerated. They also have an extremely high risk of experiencing houselessness at some point during K-12 education.

### Exclusionary Discipline

Figure 10 presents a comparison of combined suspension (in-school and out-of-school) and expulsion rates for all Oregon students in the 2021-22 through 2023-24 school years with rates for students in foster care. Data indicate that the proportion of students who received exclusionary discipline during the same year that they experienced continuing or ongoing foster placement was more than twice as high as their peers statewide.

**Figure 10: Students in Foster Care are More Likely to Receive Exclusionary Discipline**  
Percentages of Students Experiencing Exclusionary Discipline at Any Time During the School Year 2020-21 through 2023-24 School Years



Additional research will be necessary to understand the time of discipline relative to foster placement (before, during, or after), the relationships between trauma or stressors (e.g., the abuse or neglect that precipitated placement, the placement event, ongoing placement, placement end, post-placement reintegration), and behavioral challenges that result in disciplinary action. Understanding these relationships may enable Oregon’s K-12 education system to better support students in foster care through interventions that reduce the frequency of disciplinary events.

### Alternative High School Attendance

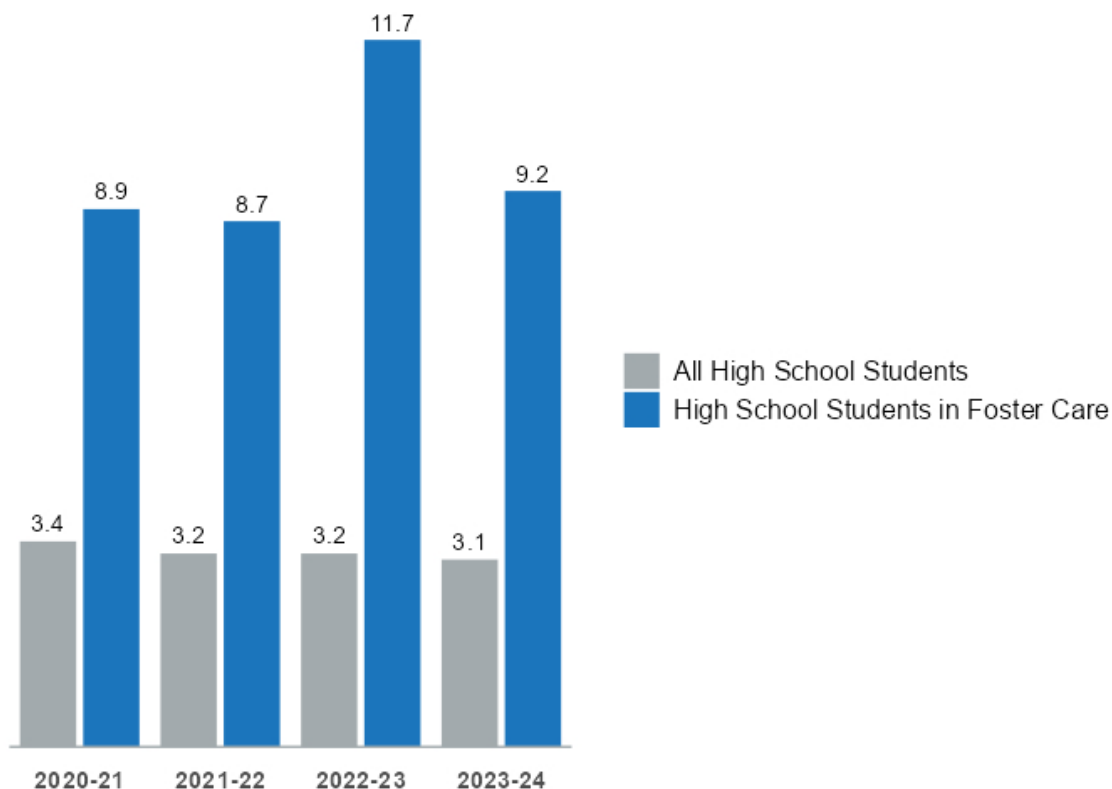
Figure 11 presents the ratio of high school students in foster care who attended alternative school relative to all Oregon high school students for the 2020-21 through 2023-24 school years.<sup>24</sup> Although alternative school attendance for students in Oregon overall has slightly declined over this period, rates of attendance for students in foster care increased in 2022-23 and remained elevated compared to prior years in 2023-24. In the 2023-24 school year, students who had experienced new or ongoing foster placement during a school year were nearly three times as likely as their peers to attend an alternative high school that year. These

<sup>24</sup> Students may also be placed into other alternative settings, such as private alternative programs, which are not included in these data points.

higher placement rates may be driven in part by higher rates of students receiving special education services – IEP teams frequently recommend alternative placements.

**Figure 11: High School Students in Foster Care Have Higher Rates of Alternative School Attendance**

Percentages of Students Placed in Alternative Schools, 2020-21 through 2023-24 School Years



**Current or Former Incarceration**

Figure 12 presents the ratio of students with a new or ongoing foster care placement who had ever experienced incarceration or detention in an Oregon youth corrections or detention facility ([JDEP](#) or [YCEP](#)) compared to all Oregon students for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years.

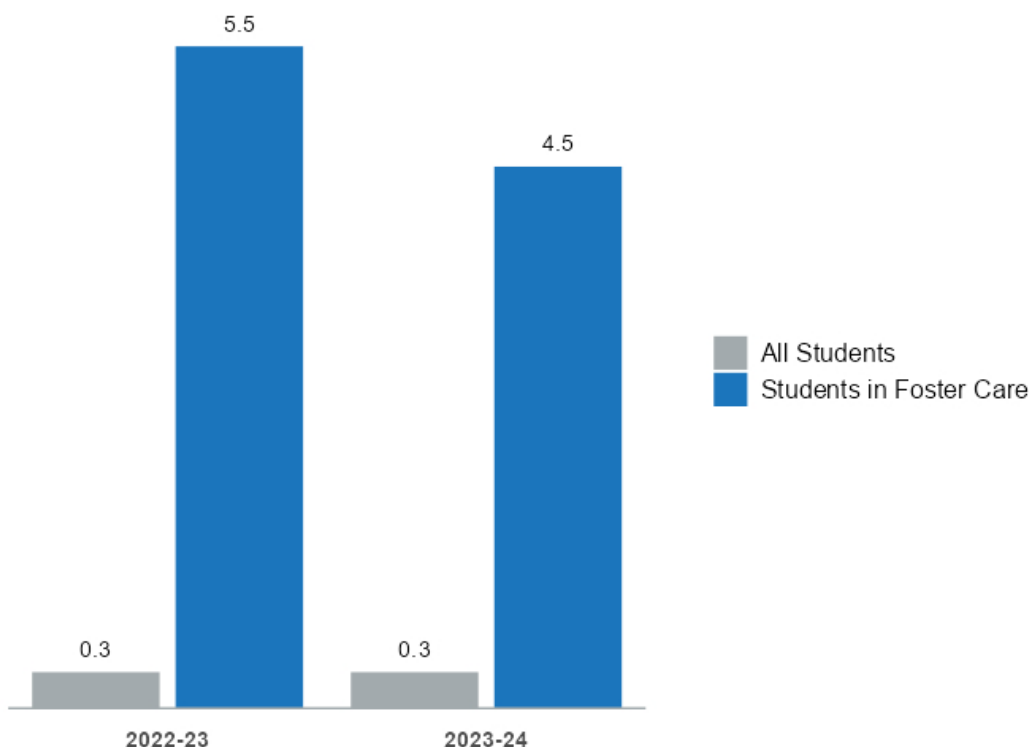
*Youth who are navigating both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are commonly known as “Crossover Youth.”*

Rates of incarceration were very low among all Oregon students, with only 0.3% of current students having had experience of incarceration or detention. By contrast, students in foster care were fifteen to eighteen times more likely than their peers to have been incarcerated (5.5% in 2022-23 and 4.5% in 2023-24).



**Figure 12: Students in Foster Care Are Significantly More Likely to Have Experienced Current or Former Incarceration**

Percentages of Currently or Formerly Incarcerated Students, 2022-23 and 2023-24 School Years



### Students Experiencing Houselessness

In addition to the trauma associated with foster care placement, students in foster care are at high risk of experiencing housing insecurity. ODE defines<sup>25</sup> houselessness as living in:

- Shelters, motels, or campgrounds
- In a car, park, abandoned building, or public transit station
- Doubling up with others due to economic hardship or housing loss
- Lacking a fixed, regular, nighttime, adequate place of residence.

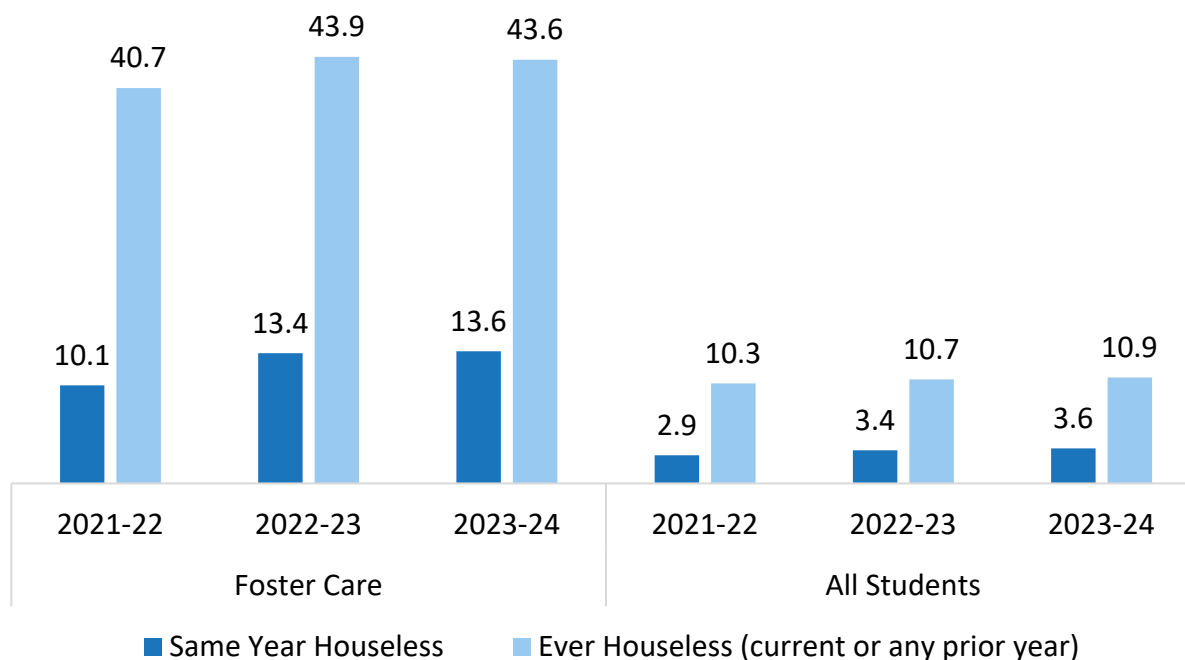
In each year since the 2021-22 school year, more than ten percent of students who experienced foster care placement in a school year were also identified by school districts as meeting the criteria for experiencing houselessness during the same year, and more than forty percent had ever experienced houselessness at some point during their K-12 education (Figure 13). By comparison, fewer than four percent of all students experienced houselessness each year during the same period, and roughly ten percent of Oregon students had ever experienced housing instability. Although the rate of students experiencing houselessness has increased

<sup>25</sup> Oregon Department of Education – [McKinney Vento Act: Students Navigating Houselessness Education Program](#)

year-over-year in Oregon, students in foster care remain roughly four times more likely than their peers to experience housing insecurity.

**Figure 13: Students In Foster Care are at High Risk of Experiencing Houselessness**

Percentage of Students Who Have Experienced Houselessness, 2021-22 through 2023-24 School Years



## Conclusion

Students in foster care are among Oregon's most vulnerable residents. The trauma of child abuse, neglect, and family separation, stresses related to home situations and foster placement, and the instability of repeated relocation create compounded challenges that make it more difficult for these students to thrive in school. This is reflected in lower academic outcomes for students in foster care compared to peers, and is exacerbated by higher-than-average rates of special education identification, exclusionary discipline, alternative school attendance, houselessness, and interaction with juvenile justice systems, all of which are independently associated with reduced academic outcomes.

This paper provided a brief introduction to the Oregon foster care system and foster student demographics, as well as a high-level overview of some of the academic and social challenges faced by students in foster care. Its purpose was to serve as the starting point for building the necessary understanding to properly support students in foster care, improve achievement trends, and ensure that these students experience outcomes that are comparable to their peers. To accomplish this, it is incumbent upon Oregon educators and policy makers to create safe, stable environments for students in foster care and to develop evidence-based interventions and support structures that promote academic success and reduce exclusion. Among other strategies, future work may involve research to understand and address the root

causes and relationships between foster placement and disciplinary incidents, special education identification, and alternative school placement, building stable relationships between students in foster care and trusted adults, identifying best practices in program implementation, and intentional engagement with students in foster care and their caregivers.

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## Additional Resources

### Guidance and Tools

[Best Practices for Supporting LGBTQ2SIA+ Youth and Families When Considering Mandatory Reporting](#), Unicorn Solutions, 2024 (Resource outlining LGBTQ2SIA+ supportive strategies alongside Oregon mandatory reporting requirements)

[Guidance for the Placement of Transgender, Non-binary, and Gender Expansive Youth in Congregate Care](#), Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, 2023 (PDF resource)

[The National Quality Improvement Center Tailored Services, Placement Stability, and Permanency for LGBTQ2S Children and Youth in Foster Care](#) (Includes webinar archives, resources, and information on supporting LGBTQ2SIA+ children and youth in foster care)

[Equity for LGBTQIA2S+ Individuals](#), Child Welfare Information Gateway (Webpage)

[Homeless Youth Handbook, Oregon Chapter](#) (Webpage)

### Research and Data

[LGBTQ Youth with a History of Foster Care](#), The Trevor Project, 2021 (Research brief describing the increased risk of suicide among LGBTQ2SIA+ students in foster care)

[LGBTQ+ Youth in the Foster Care System](#), HRC Foundation (Webpage and PDF brief)

[LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care Fact Sheet](#), 2023, Children's Rights (PDF)

[Crossover Youth Practice Model \(CYMP\) Background](#) – Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (Background and overview for a model to strengthen systems of care for students who have experienced both foster care and juvenile justice systems)