

# Educational Stability and Foster Youth

Thursday, February 17, 2022

## 8:00 am – 8:05 am | Introduction

### 8:05 am – 8:45 am

#### **The Data Behind Why Educational Stability Matters for Youth in Foster Care**

*This presentation will discuss social science data on foster youth and educational stability.*

#### **Elysia Clemens, PhD, LPC**

*Dr. Elysia Clemens is the Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer at the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab located at the University of Denver. The “Colorado Lab” is a social and health policy lab that supports all three branches of government in generating and using data to inform policy development and practice. Prior to joining the Colorado Lab, Dr. Clemens was a tenured professor at the University of Northern Colorado. She holds a doctorate in counseling and a masters in school counseling. She has worked in child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric units and in K-12 schools. Since 2014 Dr. Clemens has worked to take a data-informed approach to improving educational attainment of youth in foster care. With funding from the US Department of Education’s Institute for Educational Science, she connected state-level child welfare and education records to examine how educational stability relates to high school graduation rates. The information gleaned from this research was used to advocate for the educational stability provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act provisions.*

### 8:45 am – 9:30 am

#### **Every Student Succeeds Means Students in Foster Care Too**

*The presentation will discuss federal law and available federal funds related to foster youth and educational stability.*

#### **Emily Peeler, Staff Attorney, ABA Center on Children and the Law**

*Emily Peeler is a Staff Attorney at the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. Emily works on a variety of projects at the ABA, including the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, Pennsylvania Education Barriers, the Capacity Building Center for Courts, kinship care, and parent representation. Prior to working at the ABA Emily managed a legal diversity pipeline program with law firms and high schools across the country and worked as a youth advocacy coordinator at CASA for Children of DC. Emily received her J.D. from the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law and her M.S.W. from Boston University.*

### 9:30 am – 10:15 am

#### **State law and Missouri interpretations of Fostering Connections and ESSA**

#### **Dawn Blunda, Managing Attorney, Children’s Division**

*Ms. Blunda will discuss the factors Children’s Division considers and obstacles Children’s Division faces when determining whether to move a child to a new school. Ms. Blunda will also discuss Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and how IEPs effect school stability decisions.*

**10:15 am – 10:30 am | Break**

**10:30 am – 11:30 am**

**Policy Discussion of the Fostering Connections Act and ESSA:  
A Parent's Attorney Perspective**

*Jeannie Boettler, Stinson, LLP, Partner*

*Madison Connolly, Stinson, LLP, Associate*

*Martha Nweke, Stinson, LLP, Associate*

*Ronald Johnson, Stinson, LLP, Associate*

**11:30 am – 12:15 am**

**Discussion of the youth perspective of educational stability**

*Ms. Collier and Ms. Christian are both former Missouri foster youth. They will share their experiences in foster care including regularly moving schools and the effects educational instability had on their lives.*

***Ayanna Collier***

*Hello, my name is Ayanna Collier. I am a 19-year-old former kid of foster care. I was adopted two days before my 18th birthday. School has always been my number one priority because that was the only out I felt I had. With going to 3 different elementary schools, 3 different middle schools, and three different high schools, I was used to moving and having to work extra hard. I just wish it wouldn't have been so easy for me to constantly be moved from school to school so I could have had some stability. I wish schools especially colleges understood more about mental health. I am a hard-working kid, but all the moving takes a toll.*

***Glo Christian***

*Gloryonna Christian is a former foster youth who aged out at 21. She is currently in her senior year of college studying business administration at Harris Stowe State University in her hometown St. Louis. In her free time, she enjoys meditating/yoga, cooking, reading, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. She is currently a youth specialist for a nonprofit organization called Cherished Youth made to encourage the youth by educating them on finances, themselves, and God. Her current job is in sales as a mobile expert at TMobile.*

**12:15 pm – 1:00 pm**

**View from the bench**

*Family Court Commissioner Diane Monahan of the 21st Judicial Circuit,  
St. Louis County*

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Missouri's 21st Judicial Circuit

