

City of Philadelphia, School District and PolicyLab at CHOP Release Report on the Educational Outcomes of Youth Involved with DHS

Philadelphia, June 10, 2014 – The City of Philadelphia released a report that found 17% of all Philadelphia public school students have been involved with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and/or the juvenile justice system at some point during their school years, and that these students have greater educational needs than their peers.

The report – *Supporting the Needs of Students Involved with the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System in the School District of Philadelphia* – describes the distribution, concentration and academic outcomes of Philadelphia public school students who are served by the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system. The report is a partnered effort between the City, the School District of Philadelphia and PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

“Our Administration is committed to supporting the academic, emotional and physical well-being of all Philadelphia youth. But, it is particularly important that we focus on the needs of our most vulnerable young people,” said Mayor Michael A. Nutter. “This study details the educational needs of young people in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. For me, it also highlights the need for a statewide, student-weighted funding formula that takes into account the tremendous needs of some of our public school students.”

The report was supported by The William Penn Foundation and Philadelphia Youth Network and conducted by PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. It was commissioned by the Philadelphia Foster Care Working Group, a group of City officials and non-profit leaders charged with understanding the educational needs of Philadelphia public school students involved with DHS. The Philadelphia Foster Care Working Group was chaired by Dr. Lori Shorr, Chief Education Officer, Mayor's Office of Education.

“A study of this scope required collaboration across multiple City agencies and organizations and I want to thank the many partners and City officials who collaborated to make this report possible,” said Dr. Shorr. “This report highlights the educational challenges faced by the students who are currently – or have ever been – involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice system and strongly suggests to educators that the school environment very much matters when trying to support the needs of this particular student population. I believe this study will have national importance as policymakers and educators seek to better understand how to effectively serve youth involved with DHS.”

[David Rubin, MD, MSCE](#), Co-Director of the PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia said, “This report illustrates the magnitude of youth in our school district who have been involved with the child welfare system – 20% by the high school years, and for many schools, more than a third of their student body. Those

students who have been involved with the child welfare system are also over-concentrated in certain schools, and these schools are struggling. Improving outcomes for these students starts with identifying and deploying the appropriate resources that these schools need to support all students.”

Dr. William R. Hite, Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, added, “We greatly appreciate learning more about the needs and uniqueness of students served each day in Philadelphia and we are committed to working with all our partners to improve the educational outcomes of students who, at some time in their experience, were helped by the child welfare service. This report highlights the needs and challenges our students face and demonstrates why adequate funding and resources are a crucial part of the solution. We are grateful to DHS and the Mayor’s Office for an outstanding collaboration that will help provide some of the needed social supports students identified in the report need to succeed.”

In response to the report’s findings, the School District, DHS and Mayor’s Office of Education announced an action plan to increase the educational successes of agency-involved youth. The action plan includes a new effort by DHS to station social workers, called Education Liaisons, in public schools with high-concentrations of DHS-served youth to help support their learning needs for the 2014-2015 school year.

“We are pleased with the report as it provides overall confirmation and guidance for the work advanced by our Education Support Center,” said DHS Commissioner Anne Marie Ambrose. “For example, the report will help with the strategic placement of Education Liaisons in schools – especially high schools and middle schools with the greatest number of past and present child welfare involvement. This report will also help with our strategic investment around social supports in the schools.”

The full report is available online at: <http://policylab.chop.edu/report/supporting-students-involved-with-child-welfare>.

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