

ABA Endorses Two Blueprints that Promote Education Success for Court-Involved Children

“We think education is a way to break a cycle and provide a better path for the future for a child.”

--Judge John Williams, Administrative Judge, Hamilton County Juvenile Court, Cincinnati, OH

Lifetime success for children and youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems hinges on success in school. Yet national statistics show these court-involved children and youth are less likely to graduate high school or go to college, have greater special education needs, and experience higher rates of school discipline that disrupts learning—all due to the barriers stacked against them.

Recognizing the power of education in helping these children overcome their circumstances and succeed in life, the American Bar Association (ABA) endorsed the [*Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care \(2007\)*](#), and the [*Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System \(2016\)*](#), at its August 2017 Annual Meeting. Both Blueprints were produced under the leadership of the ABA Center on Children and the Law through partnerships with the Education Law Center, Juvenile Law Center, and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Blueprints help court, education, and child welfare or juvenile justice system professionals make practice, policy, and systemic changes to support education for children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Each Blueprint is framed around a set of goals with guidance and practical examples from around the country for how to reach those goals. The goals are broken down into benchmarks, providing an easy to follow framework that ensures access to education, promotes stability and inclusion, and helps children and youth prepare for higher education and the workforce.

What ABA Endorsement of the Blueprints Means for Your Community

The ABA’s endorsement of the two Blueprints means the nation’s largest legal association stands behind the approaches contained in each Blueprint and supports their widespread adoption. The ABA calls on judges, lawyers, and other legal practitioners to advocate for improved policies and practices that support education success for court-involved youth. The ABA also calls on federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local legislatures, government agencies, and courts to adopt laws, regulations, policies, and court rules to implement the *Blueprints*.

The Foster Care Blueprint is already being adopted in at least 12 states with good results. For example, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Kids in School Rule! project has used the Foster Care Blueprint to make policy and practice reforms across Hamilton County’s court, school, and child welfare systems to ensure children in foster care in Cincinnati public schools have positive education experiences.

The Juvenile Justice Blueprint, while just released in April 2017, is already receiving great interest by practitioners and advocates. Most recently, the Legal Center for Youth Justice and Education discussed that Blueprint at the National League of Cities’ Reengagement Network conference.

Adopt the Blueprints for Change

Adopting the Blueprints in your community will bring systems and advocates together to support school success for children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. By adopting the Blueprints, your community shows its commitment to giving children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems the

same educational opportunities as all children. This benefits each young person and society since school success drives lifetime success and helps break the cycle of justice system involvement.

Implementation Assistance is Available

The [Legal Center for Foster Care and Education](#) and the [Legal Center for Youth Justice and Education](#) can work with your jurisdiction, bringing together legal, school, and child welfare systems and professionals, to identify areas of strength and barriers to school success for children in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. The projects work to identify solutions to the barriers and help jurisdictions implement the Blueprints for Change benchmarks to guide system and practice reforms.

Foster Care Blueprint: contact Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, ccleducation@americanbar.org, visit the website at www.fostercareandeducation.org, or follow us on Twitter @FosterEdSuccess.

Juvenile Justice Blueprint: contact Legal Center for Youth Justice and Education, lcyjebblueprint@ejcenter.org , or visit the website at www.jjeducationblueprint.org.