2016-PCC FOSTERING SUCCESS: FOSTER YOUTH FACT SHEET

I. NATIONAL & REGIONAL STATISTICS
Nationwide there were 415,129 children were in foster care at the end of the 2014 reporting period (AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2014 Estimates as of July 2015 (22); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2015). Within Oregon, the Child Data Welfare Data Set reported 7622 children in foster care placement as of June, 2016, with 11, 529 receiving foster care services from July 2015–June 2016. During this same period, 322 youth exited care on/or after their 18th birthday, and 1600 youth were age 15 or older.

II. TYPICAL FOSTER YOUTH OUTCOMES
Youth aging out of the foster care system represent a vulnerable population that are less likely to graduate high school, attend college, or graduate college. Only 3% of foster youth will earn a bachelor’s degree, compared with 24% of the general population. Youth with a history of foster care are also more likely to experience homelessness, incarceration and teen parenthood. Personal narratives from foster youth commonly indicate poverty, mental health issues, interrupted schooling, and lack of familial support as major contributors to these poor outcomes.

III. FOSTER YOUTH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION CHALLENGES
The challenges most commonly faced by foster youth attending college include: A) aging-out of the support programs before graduating with a degree (state and federal funding usually limited to age 21; B) financial emergencies (e.g. car repairs, forced housing changes requiring a deposit, higher than expected utility bills, food insecurity, etc.); C) accessing mental health services and paying for prescriptions not on the approved drug list; D) paying for educational-related services not covered by state or federal aid (e.g. remediation programs, certificate programs, etc.); E) finding available supports, and being given assistance in accessing them (e.g. youth transitional services overseen by DHS such as ILP programs, EVT/EVG, etc.); F) complicated rules and procedures that lead to available funds/services not being awarded or accessed (e.g. foster youth with certain types of juvenile justice cases and/or group placements; restrictions on age at entry and exit from foster care, etc.).

IV. PCC FOSTERING SUCCESS PROGRAM OVERVIEW
The Portland Community College (PCC) Fostering Success program is a new and growing initiative to improve college/career success rates of foster youth attending any PCC campus, with the eventual goal to spread the program model to other community colleges throughout the state. This model is important because community colleges are the best first step for foster youth aging-out of the system, i.e. community colleges offer many forms of educational/vocational training that provide foster youth with a greatest chance of effectively transitioning to secure independence. Fostering Success is interwoven into the fabric of the college, utilizing current campus support services with specially trained staff to help students successfully navigate college. Fostering Success currently has one program coordinator to provide staff training, program development, and to act as a central point of contact for students attending all four PCC campuses.

V. CONCLUSION
Federal and state agencies have made great strides in recent years supporting the needs of vulnerable foster youth as they transition from care, particularly in the area of providing funding to foster youth attend college tuition free. However, since the needs of foster youth are complex, identifying and accessing a wide range of services is key to their success. Dedicated and well-funded programs in other states are effectively raising college graduation rates of foster youth by providing a clear support structure that address their many needs. Even though community college campuses have many supports in place to serve all students, foster youth are unlikely to access them without the help of programs

geared directly to foster youth. Ultimately, Fostering Success would like to see a statewide higher education initiative to support programs that serve the unique needs of foster youth.

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