Contact: Constance Farrell,
Communications Director
c.farrell@kids-alliance.org
213.368.6010 ex. 151

PRESS RELEASE

Foster Youth Education Toolkit Released to California Schools
First of its Kind Guide Focuses on Foster Youth's Most Critical Needs

Los Angeles, CA (April 16, 2015) –A new step-by-step guide to improving education outcomes for children in foster care is available for the first time to California schools, focused on the most critical areas of need for foster youth. Known as the Foster Youth Education Toolkit, the guide is designed to assist school administrators in meeting the goals of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). LCFF marks the first time any state has included foster youth in its school accountability and funding system and focuses much needed attention on the need to improve academic successes of foster youth.

Outcomes for foster youth are grim. One third attend two or more schools during a single school year compared to 7% of students statewide. Just 29% score proficient or above in English on the California Standards Test, compared to 53% of students statewide. Foster youth also have the highest dropout rates. [1]

Download the Toolkit at
kids-alliance.org/edtoolkit

LCFF offers the opportunity to change these statistics, and the comprehensive Foster Youth Education Toolkit is an all-in-one guide that covers five of the most critical areas of needs for foster youth: Foster Youth and their Education Decision Makers, Enrolling Foster Youth, Determining the Needs of Foster Youth, Supporting Foster Youth and Disenrolling Foster Youth.

"Foster children are some of our most vulnerable students, who need our help to live independently and be prepared for college and careers," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson. "The Foster Youth Education Toolkit—developed by education leaders and child welfare experts—will offer guidance to school districts on how to help their foster youth."

The toolkit is a collaboration of the Alliance for Children's Rights, the California Department of Education, the California School Board Association, the Child Welfare Council, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, Association of California School Administrators and the County Welfare Directors Association.

(more)

---

[1] All statistics cited are from: Barrat, V.X., & Berliner, B. (2013). The Invisible Achievement Gap Part 1: Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care in California's Public Schools. San Francisco: WestEd.

Each section of the Toolkit includes comprehensive information and procedures as well as easy-to-use implementation tools such as sample notification letters, records requests and helpful checklists. Users will also find the best practices for handling each topic, including completing education evaluations, assisting youth with immediate enrollment or remaining in their school of origin, awarding partial credits, supporting youth through high school graduation, disciplinary challenges and much more.

All of the procedures and tools are ready-to-use in school districts across the state through fillable PDFs. They can also be adapted to meet the requirements of a specific district through editable Word documents.

The goal of the Foster Youth Education Toolkit is to equip California school districts with clear information and tools to take next steps in implementing LCFF for foster youth and improving their education outcomes.

"School districts are more committed than ever to ensuring that students in foster care reach greater levels of achievement and graduate high school," said Janis Spire, CEO of the Alliance for Children's Rights. "But with competing demands, it can be hard for school administrators to develop their own set of best practices around this vulnerable student population. Through the Foster Youth Education Toolkit, the Alliance and our partners provide a useful blueprint and hope to come alongside districts to help them achieve their goals."

The Foster Youth Education Toolkit is available at kids-alliance.org/edtoolkit. View the Toolkit through Flipping Book to explore the sections in an interactive format. For updates, sign up for the Toolkit email list.

Education leaders are encouraged to register for a quick 30 minute overview webinar on Thursday, April 30 at 10 a.m.

###