

FairFutures➤

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

AMONG 16 TO 18-YEAR-OLDS IN FOSTER CARE, FEWER THAN HALF ARE ON TRACK TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

Some students start high school overage for their grade, and many others struggle with attendance or are not prepared academically for high school, causing them to fall behind in 9th or 10th grade.

For students who fall behind in traditional high schools, alternatives exist including alternative schools and high school equivalency/GED programs. These programs are often tailored to serve overage, under-credited students and provide them with the supports they need to graduate, sometimes in a condensed timeframe.

If a young person finds themselves significantly behind in school, coaches can guide them through their options.

Keep in mind that there is a process for students disenrolling from traditional high schools:

- A letter from parent/guardian is required requesting for the student to disenroll.
- Next, there will be a conference including the student's current school principal/guidance counselor to approve the request.
- If approved, the student is provided a “drop” letter that then allows them to enroll in an alternative educational program.
- There are some age restrictions for this process.

COACHING TIPS:

- Coaches should engage the student and caregiver/foster parent about the opportunity to transfer into an alternative school or a GED program that will allow the student a “fresh start” in a smaller environment with more individualized supports.
- The Coach should visit the program or school with the student (and the birth or foster parent, if the student has a positive relationship with them) for reflection purposes.

PLEASE NOTE:

Students who previously attended Buffalo Public Schools are encouraged to seek out a GED program (rather than one of the limited alternative school options) whereas students from Erie County (outside of Buffalo) are encouraged to consider both alternative high school options and GED programs. See [Appendix H0. GED Program List](#).

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Alternative High Schools are small high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out or fallen behind in credits. Some of these schools offer a personalized, academically rigorous environment where students can earn a high school diploma in a shorter timeframe. Some also offer individualized support services, job readiness, paid internships and college and career exploration.

There are minimal options for alternative schools for students in Buffalo and there are a few more for those who reside outside of Buffalo ([see the note at the bottom of page 1](#)). For students who are interested in alternative schools, coaches should explore schools' eligibility requirements, support the application process, visit the school with the student, and maintain contact through the application, enrollment, and persistence process.

See [Appendix F9_List of Transfer/Alternative Schools](#).

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY/GED PROGRAMS

These programs help students pass the GED exam. Some have small class sizes, counseling supports, and job training opportunities for students.

APPLICATION AND COACHING PROCESS:

Coaches should engage the student and caregiver/foster parent about the opportunity to enroll in a GED program.

ONCE THE STUDENT EXPRESSES INTEREST:

The Coach should call GED programs to determine seat availability and alignment with youth's interests and go with the young person to visit the GED program. Following enrollment, it's likely youth will take an initial assessment (e.g., TABE) and meet with staff to match them with the right course.

PERSISTENCE COACHING / ONCE THE STUDENT BEGINS ATTENDING

The Coach should:

- ☐ Meet with the young person to celebrate the achievement, reflect on the process, and discuss next steps.
- ☐ Build a relationship with the Primary Person/Advisor at the program, as they can keep the Coach abreast of the student's progress/challenges.
- ☐ Visit the program during the first few weeks to support the student and ensure they are settling in well.
- ☐ Request regular updates from the student's Primary Person/Advisor regarding the students' attendance and performance.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Students may want to study and sign up for the GED on their own, rather than enrolling in a program. Students should be discouraged from doing this as there are age limitations, testing sign-up challenges, and documentation requirements that make it difficult.

Students should not need to pay for an GED program. Typically, SUNY programs offer quality, academically rigorous instruction; however, they often have stricter eligibility requirements than nonprofit programs and sometimes have limited enrollment or long waiting lists.

For a map of New York State GED programs visit www.acces.nysed.gov/hse/hse-prep-programs-maps.

For additional programs, see [Appendix H0_GED Programs](#).