



Social worker Diana Flores is part of the First District Foster Youth Education Program that works to improve educational outcomes and help foster youth achieve academic success.

With the school year in full swing, Diana Flores is undeniably in her element as a children’s social worker helping youth in foster care achieve their educational goals.

“Education is a significant factor in a child’s well-being and development. But for children in the foster care system, it can often be overlooked due to case demands and competing priorities,” said Diana, who has been with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) First District Foster Youth Education Program (FDFYEP) since 2015.

“I love that this program has allowed me to really take a hands-on approach as an advocate to ensure that young people receive the educational support they need to overcome obstacles, meet their goals and succeed as they transition

beyond high school,” she added.

Initially piloted in 2008, the program was championed by former Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina, who sought to improve educational stability and outcomes for older youth in foster care in the county’s first supervisorial district. Supervisor Hilda Solis, who succeeded Supervisor Molina in 2014, has continued to support the program.

Each of the six social workers on the FDFYEP team is embedded within a different school district, where they partner with local high schools to support the unique needs of students in foster care.

“School personnel aren’t always familiar with foster youths’ background,” Diana said. “Once we connect and start having discussions, they are very open to working collaboratively to figure out how best to help the student.”

The FDFYEP social workers seek to promote educational continuity, academic success and the transition to adulthood by encouraging higher education or additional training. On any given day, their work involves a variety of activities, such as advocating for youth to remain in or return to their school of origin, monitoring attendance and grades, and making referrals for services like tutoring or mental health. Additionally, they help youth apply to colleges, register for classes and connect them with on-campus support programs for youth in foster care.



The FDFYEP team supports the educational needs of hundreds of foster youth each year. Front row (L to R): Gloria Corona, Rocio Angeles, Alma Venegas, Norma Sanabria and Andy Ng. Back row (L to R): Elvia Mendez, Alicia Aguayo, Rosalba Arroyo and Diana Flores.

Participation in the program is voluntary, but very few decline the service. The additional assistance above and beyond traditional case management makes the program popular among students under DCFS supervision.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, 249 youth across five participating school districts benefitted from the program. Ninety-four percent of program participants graduated during the year, compared to the national average for youth in foster care of less than 50 percent. More than 90 percent of eligible students in the program have obtained their high school diplomas over the last seven years.

Diana appreciates that she is able to improve outcomes for those who need it most.

“By the time we get to them in high school, most of these youth have been struggling academically for years,” she said. “But the responses from the students are overwhelmingly positive, and I love knowing that I can plant a seed and help them recognize their own potential.”

Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to 800-540-4000