



## **School Mobility of Colorado's Students in Foster Care**

The school mobility rate for students in foster care during the 2013-14 academic year was 42.8%<sup>i</sup>. This rate indicates that during the 2013-14 academic year, 42.8% of students who experienced an out-of-home placement also entered or exited an educational environment for reasons other than grade promotion<sup>ii</sup>. The foster care school mobility rate was nearly three times the state average.

School changes that are not in a child's best interest are a barrier to successful progression through the K-12 education system and on-time high school graduation<sup>iii</sup>. A goal of the Colorado Department of Human Services Educational Outcomes Steering Committee (EOSC) is to make it possible and practical for students in foster care to stay in their school of origin when that is in their best interest. Identifying a feasible transportation solution is part of that work<sup>iv</sup>.

In September 2015, the EOSC recommended to the Colorado Department of Human Services Child Welfare Executive Leadership Council that a Request for Information (RFI) be developed in order to learn more about potential transportation solutions. The information in this summary brief is designed to inform the development of and responses to that RFI.

## **Transportation-Relevant School Mobility**

Data are not available on how many of the transitions captured in the state school mobility rates are in a child's best interest<sup>v</sup>. Still, the following types of school mobility were identified as having transportation planning relevance:

- Transferring between schools in the same district for reasons other than grade promotion
- Transferring from one Colorado school district to another
- Exiting from a facility school or a juvenile detention center
- Re-engaging dropouts

## Unduplicated Counts

Table 1 and Figure 1 below include the number of unique students in foster care who experienced transportation-relevant school mobility over the past five years. Students are only included in this count once regardless of whether they experienced one or more incidences of mobility. Students who transferred over the summer months are included in these counts with the exception of the structural progression into elementary school, middle school or high school.<sup>vi</sup>

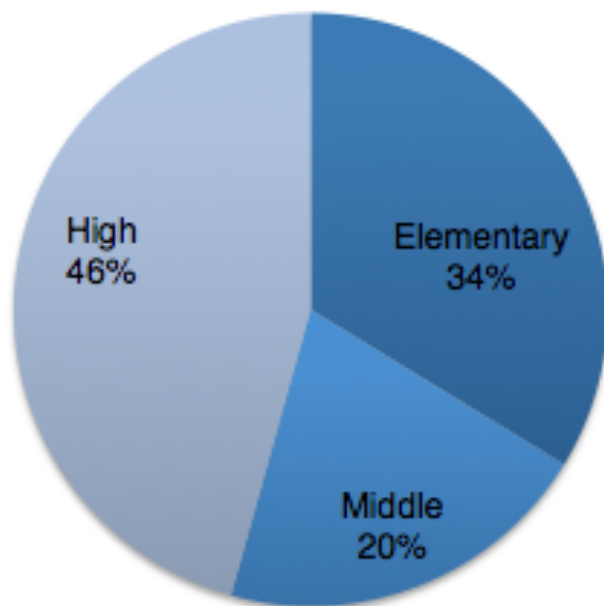
The total number of students who experienced transportation-relevant school mobility has been stable since 2011-12. The number of elementary school students has increased, while the number of high school students has decreased over the last three years. The number of students in foster care who were also eligible for special education services and experienced transportation-relevant school mobility declined.

Table 1. Number of students with transportation-relevant school mobility

|                                 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Total Student Count</b>      | 3012    | 2814    | 2569    | 2488    | 2513    |
| <b>Elementary</b>               | 944     | 889     | 789     | 933     | 958     |
| <b>Middle</b>                   | 644     | 620     | 516     | 475     | 500     |
| <b>High</b>                     | 1404    | 1305    | 1264    | 1080    | 1055    |
| <b>Special Education (K-12)</b> | 966     | 895     | 732     | 667     | 688     |

Source: Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Department of Human Services

Figure 1. Five-Year aggregate transportation-relevant school mobility incidents



Transportation solutions must reflect the age and developmental level of students. Across school levels, it is anticipated that students will require varying levels of supervision. Some students may require transportation related accommodations consistent with an IEP or 504 Plan<sup>vii</sup>.

All students requiring transportation must be able to fully participate in school activities including athletics and extracurricular activities that begin or end after the instructional day<sup>viii</sup>.

## Transportation-Relevant School Mobility Incidents

The Educational Outcomes Steering Committee recommends that the *school of origin* be defined as the student's current school or a recently attended school in the same or an adjacent district.

Three types of transportation incidents are included in analyses:

- Within district transfers
  - Number of transfers from one school to another within the same school district.
- Between district transfers
  - Number of transfers from a school located in school district "A" to a school located in school district "B".
- Other transportation-relevant incidents
  - Number of exits from a juvenile detention center or a facility school and number of times students were re-engaging after dropping out.

Table 2. Transportation-relevant school mobility incidents.

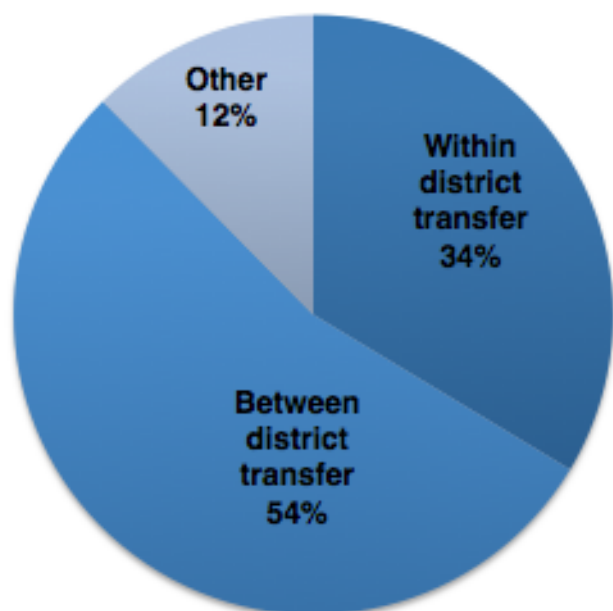
|                                   | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Total Mobility Incidents</b>   | 4401    | 4369    | 3755    | 3587    | 3710    |
| <b>Within District Transfers</b>  | 1571    | 1435    | 1268    | 1158    | 1235    |
| <b>Between District Transfers</b> | 2387    | 2166    | 2047    | 2035    | 2062    |
| <b>Other</b>                      | 433     | 768     | 440     | 394     | 413     |

Source: Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Department of Human Services

The pie chart illustrates five years of aggregated data. More than half of the mobility incidents were between district transfers. Approximately one-third of the incidents were within district transfers.

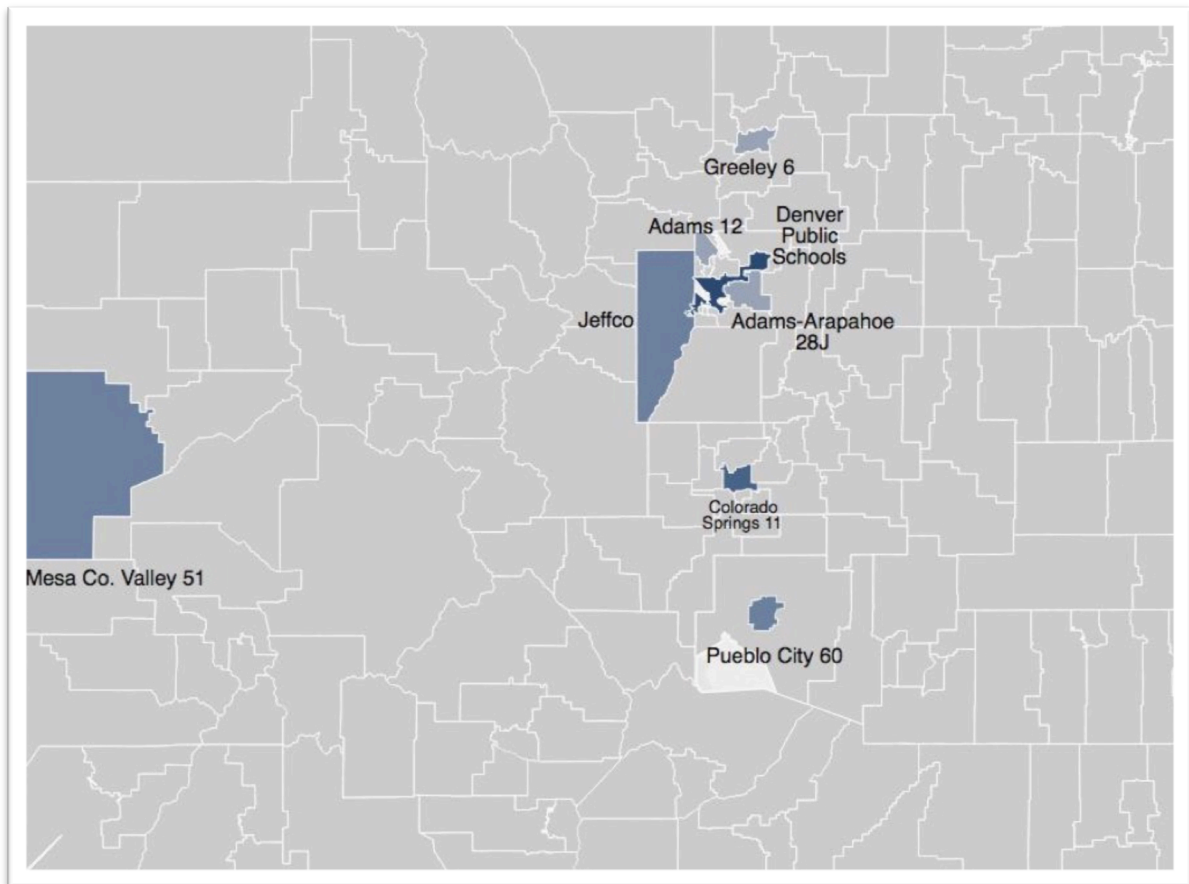
Exiting from a detention center or a facility school and re-engaged dropouts are combined into one slice of the pie chart (labeled "other"). This is because their school of origin may be in the same district as their out-of-home placement (i.e., where they are currently living) or where they recently attended school in an adjacent district.

Figure 2. Five-year aggregate types of transportation-relevant mobility incidents



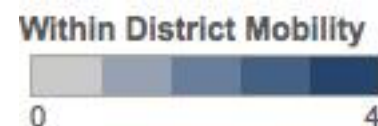
## Within District Mobility Incidents

An analysis of state foster care education data over the last three years<sup>ix</sup>, shows that transfers that occurred within a school district were concentrated in the Denver Metro Area School Districts, Colorado Springs 11, Pueblo City 60, Mesa County Valley 50 (e.g., Grand Junction), and Greeley District 6. Districts with darker shades of blue had higher numbers of transfers from one school to another within that district than those districts coded in lighter shades.



School districts shaded in grey had fewer than 25 within-district foster care student transfers on average per year. However, all students in foster care who require transportation to stay in their school of origin need to be served. It is possible that transportation will also be needed for students within the districts shaded in grey.

Mobility category 0 < 25 incidents; mobility category 1 = 25-49 incidents; mobility category 2 = 50-79 incidents; mobility category 3 = 100-199 incidents; mobility category 4 = 200-299 within district transfers per year



## Between District Mobility Incidents

The transfers between Colorado school districts were concentrated in the Denver Metro Area and El Paso County Area.

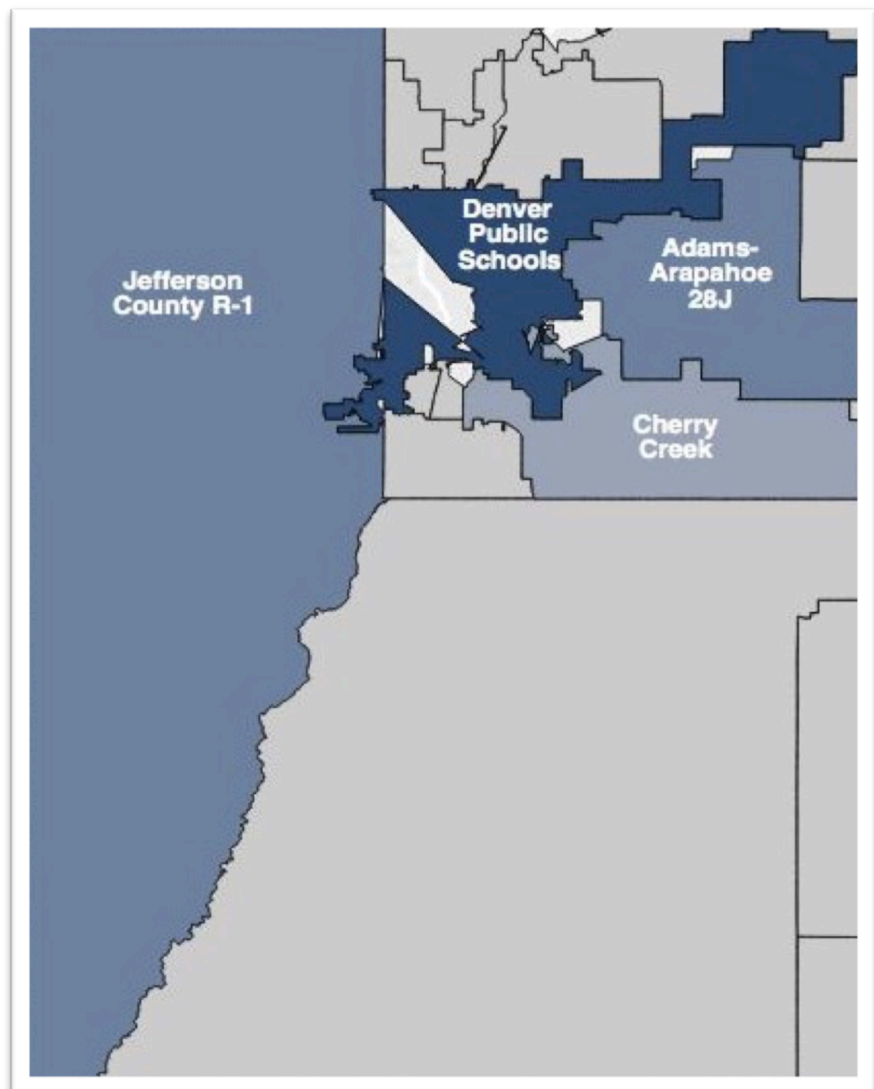
This information is based on the number of transfers from a Colorado public school in one district to a school in another district during the last three years. Transfers to or from a detention center or a facility school were excluded from this geographic analysis, as transportation would not be provided back to these educational environments.

### Denver Metro Area

Denver Public Schools (DPS) had the most transfers to and from other districts in the metro area. The number of incidents of students in foster care entering DPS from Adams-Arapahoe 28J, Cherry Creek, and Jefferson County R-1 were similar to the number of transfers from DPS to these same districts.

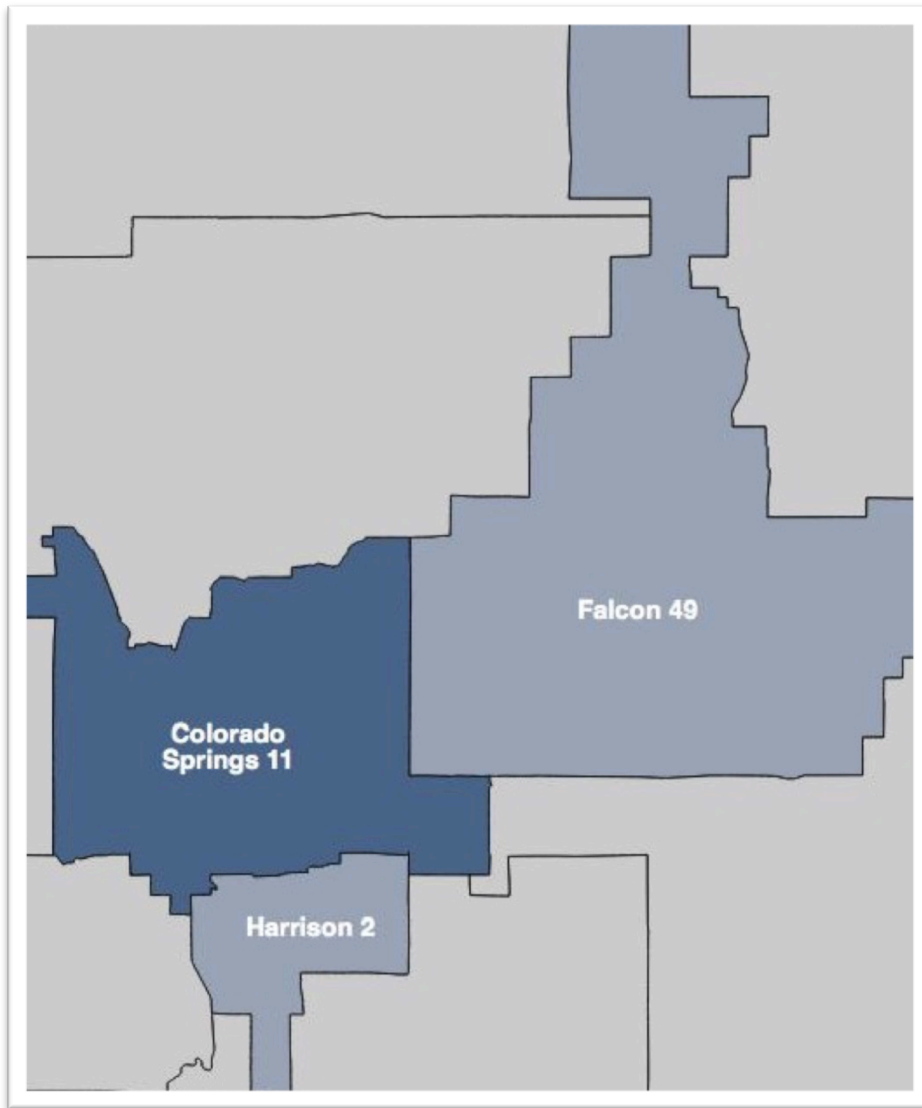
Darker shades of blue indicate high numbers of between district mobility in the metro area.

There were transfers among the school districts surrounding DPS, but the number of incidents was less than those into and out of DPS.



## El Paso County Area

El Paso County includes seventeen school districts. Colorado Springs 11 is the hub of transfers between districts in the El Paso County area. The majority of the between district transfers occurred between Colorado Springs 11 and either Falcon 49 or Harrison 2. There were a minimal number of transfers between Falcon 49 and Harrison or the other school districts in El Paso County.



## Other Geographical Areas

- Pueblo City 60 and Pueblo County 70 had a pattern of transfers between these districts.
- The Western Slope had minimal mobility between school districts.

## **Data Source and Sample:**

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) have an ongoing data use agreement for the purposes of identifying the current educational outcomes of students in foster care and factors that affect these outcomes. The goal is to create a roadmap for systems-level reform and improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. CDE and the University of Northern Colorado have a time-limited and project-specific data use agreement to conduct research that informs the State's commitment to taking a data-informed approach to improving educational outcomes for students in foster care. Basic out-of-home placement data from CDHS' TRAILS database were matched with select educational data maintained by CDE.

Types of school mobility are based on entry codes reported by school districts to CDE. Patterns of within and between district changes are based on the sequence recorded in school records and school district codes. School changes that occurred over the summer are included with the exception of structural progressions from elementary to middle schools or middle to high schools.

This sample included students who experienced an out-of-home placement<sup>x</sup> and were enrolled (K-12) in a Colorado Public School between the July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2014. The duration of the out-of-home placement could be brief (i.e., a few days) or cross multiple years. School mobility was reported for students and incidents that occurred in the same year as an out-of-home placement.

## **Acknowledgment:**

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## Endnotes:

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<sup>i</sup> Parra, J., & Martinez, J. (2015). *2013–2014 state policy report dropout prevention and student engagement*. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education.

<sup>ii</sup> Out-of-home placements include congregate care settings such as group homes, residential childcare, detention and youth corrections, and psychiatric facilities, as well as family-like settings including foster care, certified and non-certified kinship, and even youth in independent living arrangements.

<sup>iii</sup> Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, American Bar Association Center, Casey Family Programs. (2008). *Blueprint for change: Education success for children in foster care* (second ed.).

<sup>iv</sup> In addition to minimizing school changes that are not in a child's best interest, the EOSC is also working on Goal 2 of the Blueprint for Change: "Youth are guaranteed seamless transitions between schools and school districts when school moves occur."

<sup>v</sup> CDHS' Administrative Review Division (ARD) does in-depth reviews of files of children and youth who were in out-of-home placements for six or more months. School transitions are included in these reviews. ARD information may be another data point for consideration. Transportation solutions apply to students with brief out-of-home placements as well as those that would be included in ARD reviews.

<sup>vi</sup> Transitions into kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade in students' first detail record were excluded from analyses as many of these transitions are associated with natural progressions into elementary, middle, and high schools. Including mobility in the first detail record for other grades is a departure from the CDE school mobility calculations. Child welfare placement changes occur over the summer months and best interest determination process and transportation applies to those transitions. Re-engaged dropouts entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade are the exception to this approach. All re-engaged dropout events were included, even those in the first detail record.

<sup>vii</sup> An IEP (Individualized Education Programs) and 504 Plan may include accommodations needed that for students with a disability or medical condition that limits major life activities to participate in public education in the least restrictive environment.

<sup>viii</sup> EOSC recommendation consistent with Blueprint Goal 4: "Youth have the opportunity and support to fully participate in all aspects of the school experience."

<sup>ix</sup> Last three years of data were used in geographical analyses because the unduplicated counts and incident numbers were relatively stable during that time period.

<sup>x</sup> See ii for OOH placement definition.