

University at Buffalo School of Law

Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law

Baldy Center Blog

Baldy Center

3-1-2021

Aldiama Anthony reflects on the article “School definitely failed me, the system failed me” – Identifying opportunities to impact educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth.

Aldiama Anthony

University at Buffalo School of Law (Student)

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/baldy_center_blog

Recommended Citation

Aldiama Anthony, *Aldiama Anthony reflects on the article “School definitely failed me, the system failed me” – Identifying opportunities to impact educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth.*, (2021).

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/baldy_center_blog/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Baldy Center at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Baldy Center Blog by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.

Blog 10. Aldiama Anthony reflects on the article “School definitely failed me, the system failed me” — Identifying opportunities to impact educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth.



Photographic representation courtesy of Canva, 2021.

Blog Author: Aldiama Anthony, J.D. Candidate 2021, University at Buffalo School of Law, President, UB Black Law Student Association

Introduction: When you hear the word "homeless," what exactly comes to mind? Most times, the term immediately conjures up an image of a single adult sleeping under a bridge, in a park, or a car. In fact, very few fully understand the growing crisis of homeless youth. There is a significant body of research on educational outcomes for children and youth who experience homelessness and on outcomes for youth in foster care, yet little research that focuses on youth who have experienced all of these challenges. A study conducted by three Baldy Center research grant recipients, Annahita Ball, Elizabeth Bowen, and Annette Semanchin-Jones, “School definitely failed me, the system failed me,” takes a cross-system research approach to this critical, but rarely addressed social issue affecting youths in our society.

Aldiana Anthony reflects on the article "School definitely failed me, the system failed me": Identifying opportunities to impact educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth.

Blog Author: Aldiana Anthony, J.D. Candidate 2021, University at Buffalo School of Law, President, UB Black Law Student Association

Keywords: Homeless, Youth, Education, Homelessness, Foster Care, Educational Outcomes, Cross-System, Welfare, Housing, Collaboration, Trauma-Informed Approach, Community.

When you hear the word "homeless," what exactly comes to mind? Most times, the term immediately conjures up an image of a single adult sleeping under a bridge, in a park, or a car. In fact, very few fully understand the growing crisis of homeless youth.

There is a significant body of research on educational outcomes for children and youth who experience homelessness and on outcomes for youth in foster care, yet little research that focuses on youth who have experienced all of these challenges. A study conducted by three Baldy Center research grant recipients, Annahita Ball, Elizabeth Bowen, and Annette Semanchin-Jones, "School definitely failed me, the system failed me," takes a cross-system research approach to this critical, but rarely addressed social issue affecting youths in our society.

Their study builds on past research to better understand cross-system youths' experiences and identifies areas of opportunity across systems to improve educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth. Specifically, the study addresses the potential protective factors and points of intervention that could lead to improved educational outcomes for cross-system youth, within the systems of child welfare, education, and housing services based on the youths' experiences. Here are some important takeaway points:

1. Legislative Acts alone are not enough. Educational setbacks and barriers to academic success represent a failure across the systems of child welfare, homeless services, and education collectively. Despite federal policies like the 'Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act' of 2008, and the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' of 2015, youth continue to experience negative outcomes.

2. Homelessness and child-welfare is not a race/gender-exclusive social issue. Research conducted in Buffalo, NY between July and November 2016 involved a sample of 20 young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who had experienced involvement with child protection, homelessness, and educational difficulties before age 18. The individuals in the sample were diverse in terms of race,

ethnicity, and sexual orientation, and all of the youth experienced some negative educational outcomes during their primary and secondary schooling.

3. Cross-systems youth suffer significantly. The negative impacts on youth in systems of child welfare, education, and housing services include high absenteeism, poor grades, repeating a grade, social-behavioral problems, dropping out of school, school mobility, discipline (including suspensions or expulsions), and difficulty with peers. The study results indicated that 70% of the study participants experienced five or more of these challenges and 90% experienced three or more. The research exposed the feelings of isolation, stigma, and lack of control that cross-systems youth struggle with daily. It also shed light on the several reasons these youth don't trust the "systems" and the multiple negative consequences that impacted their life and education because of this distrust.

4. With every crisis comes opportunity. Study participants were able to articulate some key factors that they felt made a positive difference, or that could have helped them along the way along with the significant barriers noted. Several of these factors crossed multiple systems and highlighted potential opportunities for intervening and promoting positive educational outcomes. These included: 1) having an advocate; 2) using a trauma-informed approach, and 3) providing opportunities for normalizing experiences of childhood.

Ball, Bowen, and Semanchin-Jones' research suggests an urgent need for strategies to improve cross-system collaboration and ensure that systems are more responsive to youth voices in order to improve educational outcomes for homeless and child welfare-involved youth.