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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Supporting Collegiate Foster Youth and Alumni: A Mixed-Method Planning Approach for Higher Education

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Highlights

- Post-secondary education institutions are implementing support programs to assist foster youth and alumni matriculating into higher education.
- Researchers used Group Concept Mapping (GCM) with a convenience sample of 51 foster youth/alumni to identify planning elements to develop on-campus support programs.
- The final cluster map yielded an eight cluster solution and analyses revealed significant differences in priority.

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Post-secondary education can be an integral component for young people transitioning into adulthood (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). Despite this importance, higher education outcomes for foster youth and alumni (i.e., those formerly in foster care) are dismal. Researchers have estimated that as few as one in ten individuals from foster care will enroll in college (Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2013). What's more troubling is that even youth and alumni who do enroll in a college or university, are far less likely to complete a degree, when compared to their non-fostered peers (Davis, 2006; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010, etc.).

In response to these troubling outcomes, colleges and universities are increasingly making more concentrated efforts to support collegiate foster youth and alumni. In most instances, these efforts take the form of campus support programs. However, participatory

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