

THE PIECE UNSEEN: a year in the life of a Georgia child in foster care

SEPTEMBER AUGUST OCTOBER

School year begins Student enters 6th grade.

Enters foster care

DFCS assigns student a case manager and places in foster home. The home's rules prohibit her from talking to her siblings for 3 weeks.

2nd foster home, 2nd school

DFCS moves student to new foster home. Foster parents enroll her in new school. Her school records are lost.

2nd case manager

DFCS assigns new case manager. The school does not implement a federallyrequired individualized education program (IEP) for her disability. School incident triggers outburst. The school suspends her immediately, pending disciplinary hearing – three weeks later.

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY

Suspension, 3rd home, 3rd case manager, 3rd school

School hearing officer gives an additional 2 week suspension. Student's foster parents have full time jobs and cannot supervise her during school hours. DFCS moves student to new foster home, enrolls her in new school, and assigns new case manager. She spends Christmas hours away from her family without contact.

DFCS moves the student back to previous foster home and re-enrolls her in school. DFCS assigns a new case manager. Excited about returning to the school community, she joins the school play. Her medical records are lost. She has no behavioral healthcare.

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

Another move

4th case manager

4th home, 4th school

DFCS moves the student to a group home to access healthcare. She has to drop out of school play. Group home enrolls her in new school. Case manager quits. Home instability causes student distress and behavior problems.

5th home, 5th case manager, 5th school

DFCS moves student to new foster home and new school and assigns new case manager.

6th home, school expulsion

DFCS moves student to new foster home in same school district. She has outburst at school. The school expels her.

MAY

JUNE

JULY

School year ends, hospitalization

At this point, the child has attended 5 schools in one school year. Her case manager enrolls her for in-patient care at a hospital.

7th home, 6th grade for the 2nd time

The student must retake the 6th grade due to the disruptions during the year.