



# Instability in Foster Care: How Transitions Into and Out of Foster Care Relate to School Discipline

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**Instability in Foster Care: How Transitions Into and Out of Foster Care Relate to School**

**Discipline**

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**Abstract**

Students in the foster care system tend to have lower educational outcomes than their peers, including more frequent disciplinary events. However, few studies have explored how transitions into and out of foster care placements are associated with educational outcomes. Using longitudinal data from four California school districts, this study investigated the dynamics of entering versus exiting foster care to predict school discipline and how this relationship ultimately influences absenteeism. Our findings suggest that students in foster care are more likely than their peers to face disciplinary action, especially exclusionary discipline, particularly when entering foster care. We also find suggestive evidence that disciplinary actions upon entry increase student absenteeism for students in foster care.

### **Instability in Foster Care: How Transitions Into and Out of Foster Care Relate to School Discipline**

The goal of the foster care system is to protect children from maltreatment, neglect, and abuse by removing them from unsafe home environments to temporarily place them in family-like settings until a safe, permanent home is found (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). However, meeting the educational needs of students in the foster care remains a significant challenge in the United States. One key issue is that, as a group, these students frequently face instability (i.e., entering and exiting the foster care system), which increases student mobility, decreases stable school enrollment, and affects schooling outcomes (Berger et al., 2015; Ferguson & Wolkow, 2012).

Consequently, over the past several decades, federal policy has increased its focus on increasing educational continuity and stability for students in foster care in educational institutions (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019). For instance, recent federal legislation has prioritized reducing disproportionate mobility rates of students in foster care. The passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 required collaboration between child welfare and education agencies to promote permanent placements to improve child healthcare and educational stability. It stipulated that students could continue to remain in the school of their best interest even as they switch guardians and those who change schools have a prompt and seamless transition. Further, to address academic outcomes, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) through the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. This legislation specifically promotes school stability for students in foster care by providing guidance on how state education agencies could support students in foster care by allowing students to remain in their school of origin, allowing for immediate enrollment if not in the school of origin, supporting quick transfer of school

records if switching school, and implementing cost-effective transportation options for students. Therefore, federal policy has established baseline requirements and guidelines vis-à-vis federal funding for states to develop their own programs that address the needs of children in foster care and their families that reduce school mobility.

Even before this noteworthy set of federal legislation, California – the site of this current study – has prioritized supporting and improving educational outcomes for foster youth. In 2003, the state became the first in the nation to pass legislation that guarantees educational rights to students in foster care. Since then, California has built upon these rights by adding further requirements for districts to provide additional support and resources specifically targeted toward foster youth. For example, California law dictates that children in foster care and the person with the right to make educational decisions on behalf of the child are to consult with the local child welfare agency and school district to make the best decision about school enrollment. Based on state and federal law, the process gives preference to the school of origin whereas a school change requires a written explanation (Burns et al., 2022) – all of this for the sake of addressing (and reducing) instability. Additionally, the cost of transportation should not be used when making enrollment decisions. As such, California has a system that seeks to learn more about the educational experiences of students in foster care and has made reducing school mobility a goal.

Despite these efforts, the body of current research has documented persistent academic and non-academic disparities between students in foster care and their peers. In a meta-analysis, Trout et al. (2008) found that students in foster care performed below grade level consistently across academic areas on achievement measures. Additionally, this study also highlighted teachers generally reported these students to be academically at-risk. Students in foster care are also more likely to miss more school (O’Higgins et al., 2017), be retained a grade (Stone, 2007),

and complete high school with a GED rather than high school diploma (Pecora et al., 2006). Across multiple state and local contexts, students in foster care are also more likely to have disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions (Burns et al., 2022; Smithgall et al., 2005; Zima et al., 2000).

Yet, little has been reported on the different experiences of entering and exiting foster care – i.e., the instability of foster care status. This is concerning because of the 606,000 children in the American public foster care system in 2021, 207,000 (34%) exited within the same year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Similarly, within our sample from four large California school districts, around 70% of the roughly 14,000 students in foster care in our sample switched in and out of foster care status over the course of four years. By leveraging longitudinal state administrative data, this study is the first—to our knowledge—to explore school trends for students in foster care as they transition into and out of the foster care system. Because schools and districts are invested in better supporting students in foster care, understanding these students' experiences can encourage targeted, time-relevant educational supports and resources.

In this study, we focus on foster care instability (i.e., movement in and out of foster care status) as it relates to school discipline, and how this in turn relates to absenteeism. Accordingly, this study addresses the four following research questions:

Research question 1: How does being in foster care predict school disciplinary outcomes?

Research question 2: Do these disciplinary outcomes depend on whether a student is entering into versus exiting out of foster care status?

Research question 3: How does the relationship between foster care and disciplinary outcomes vary across student subgroups by gender, race/ethnicity, and age?

Research question 4: Do foster youth with more disciplinary events have different school absence patterns?

School disciplinary policies and practices influence individual engagement with educational institutions in ways that affect other student outcomes. Disciplinary practices inform the broader schoolwide context that, in turn, permeate through classroom dynamics and peer group relationships, affecting intermediate and long-term student outcomes (Furlong et al., 2003). Research has already established relationships between suspensions and future student absenteeism (LiCalsi et al., 2021), lower academic achievement (Hwang, 2018; Lacoë & Steinberg, 2018), and increased likelihood of dropout (Marchbanks et al., 2015; Noltemeyer et al., 2015). While it is important to look at disciplinary patterns among all students, the extent to which disparities exist between foster students can further exacerbate the severity of future negative consequences.

Furthermore, we focus on the link between discipline and absenteeism in our final research question. Students in foster care typically have more absences than their peers. In our sample from the 2015-2016 to the 2018-2019 school years, students in foster care missed an average of 10 days while their peers missed an average of 8 days. Despite only missing a few more days on average, 21.6% of students in foster care were classified as chronically absent, meaning they missed 10 percent or more instructional days, compared to 12.8% of non-foster students. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing around 18 days for a normal academic year. Looking at these two measures indicates that students in foster care not only have higher average absences but are also more likely to experience severe attendance issues that could affect their academic performance and behavior in school. Prior research has indicated that students who are chronically absent tend to show greater frequencies of disruptive behavior (Gottfried, 2014).

Further, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, student absenteeism has drastically increased among foster youth (Gee et al., 2023). For example, between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, foster youth chronic absenteeism across the state increased from 34.5% to 46.5%, while pre-pandemic, the rate in 2018-19 was 27.7% (California Department of Education, 2023). While absenteeism patterns in our sample vary in magnitude from the statewide trends, the patterns in our partner districts can be informative in understanding the relationship between student discipline patterns and attendance patterns in tandem to better pinpoint how discipline could underlie and further exacerbate school disengagement and absenteeism, especially given the ongoing disciplinary challenges foster youth encounter coupled with rising absenteeism rates.

## **Background**

### **School Discipline**

How students are disciplined in school has lasting consequences. Research has established the existence of the school-to-prison pipeline where student disciplinary actions are associated with a much higher likelihood of future engagement with the judicial system (Novak, 2019). Exclusionary discipline, such as out-of-school suspensions and expulsions has already been linked to a host of negative future outcomes and student disengagement from educational institutions (Noltemeyer, et al., 2015; Lui et al., 2023). Students who attended schools with more exclusionary discipline policies were more likely to be arrested and incarcerated as adults, more likely to drop out of school, and less likely to attend college (Bacher-Hicks et al. 2019; Davison, 2022). Though research has discussed the gendered and racialized dimensions of the school-to-prison pipeline, there is also concern for students in foster care. In a 2016 profile of prison inmates in the United States, around 9% of all prisoners had lived in a foster home at some point



growing up (Beatty & Snell, 2016). Better understanding and addressing disparities that exist while students are in school can help diminish other systemic disparities.

While there is a growing body of work examining the disciplinary events of students in foster care, much of that research has been limited due to methodological limitations and small sample sizes. Investigating 31 studies using four meta-analyses, Scherr (2007) examined the special education eligibility, grade retention, and disciplinary rates of students in foster care. Only ten of these studies focused on disciplinary actions, and only one of those compared students in foster care to their peers. Studies that include direct comparisons to peers allow for clearer conclusions on descriptive trends for both groups. The one study with a comparison group used the 1997 and 1999 National Survey of America's Families and found that students in foster care were more likely to experience disciplinary events than their peers (Kortenkamp & Ehrle, 2002). While this study had a sample size of more than 44,000, it relied on self-reported data from parents and simple percent comparisons.

O'Higgins et al. (2017) provide a more recent systematic review of 39 studies looking broadly at the factors that are associated with educational outcomes, including discipline, for students in foster care. Only twenty-one studies featured a comparison to students not in foster care. When looking at predictors of educational outcomes for students in foster care across the literature, the study found that gender, race/ethnicity, and disability status were consistent predictors across the current literature. Importantly, the study calls for research to include studies that have more rigorous methods, larger samples, longitudinal designs, and a myriad of data on children, families, placements, and environments. Having more studies with experimental or quasi-experimental designs is also key to pushing research forward. Thus far, these descriptive studies have established that there is a disparity but not the extent a disparity exists, all else

equal. Prior research has underscored the importance of school-level characteristics, such as school level, type, and climate, in the disparities of disciplinary outcomes (Welsh & Little, 2018). In California, the site of our study, nearly half of all students in foster care are enrolled in high-poverty schools, where more than 80% of students are eligible for free and reduced-priced meals (Burns et al., 2022). Prior research on school discipline found that schools with higher proportions of students of color and low-income students have higher rates of exclusionary discipline use (Lui et al., 2023; Gottfredson et al., 2005; Mendez et al. 2002). To go beyond simple descriptive trends, studies need to control for key student and school characteristics.

A few recent studies have begun to address these concerns and improve our understanding of the discipline of students in foster care. Kothari et al. (2018) looked at the disciplinary outcomes of 315 students in foster care to see which individual characteristics predicted the likelihood of having a disciplinary event. Their results suggested that gender, race/ethnicity, grade-level, and school mobility were significant predictors of school discipline for students in foster care. While this study only examined students in foster care, it does indicate the potential that subgroups of students in foster care might experience disproportionate rates of discipline, particularly male students and students of color. This motivates our current, third research question where we examine differences within the foster student group. Burns et al. (2022) analyzed California data and documented disparities in educational outcomes for students across the state in foster care versus their peers on school mobility, absenteeism, discipline, academic achievement, and post-secondary outcomes. Each of these two projects addresses one, but not both concerns of O'Higgins et al. (2017). The former provides a much stronger methodological investigation of disciplinary trends, while the latter describes trends across a statewide population of students.

### **Foster Care Instability**

As described in the previous section, this present study seeks to extend current research in two ways. First, our sample allows us to examine discipline not just for students in foster care, but relative to their peers. Second, as described in this section, we build upon exiting research by looking at how transitioning into and out of the foster care system influences student discipline. To our present knowledge, we have not found existing work that goes beyond comparing students in foster care to their peers by investigating the instability of entering and exiting the foster care system on educational outcomes – i.e., the instability inherent in many foster students' lives.

Prior research has linked instability both at home and at school to various negative educational outcomes, including achievement, development, and attendance. In a literature review on K-12 student mobility, Welsh (2017) found that moving between schools is generally associated with a negative impact on student educational outcomes, including school discipline. The frequent changing of schools can prevent students from building long-term relationships with educators and the school community that support their development. Furthermore, Gottfried (2015a) suggests that instability is associated with absenteeism. Namely, when educational contexts become unstable (such as moving around), students feel more anxious about those settings and hence less likely to want to be in those places – hence, an increase in absenteeism.

We know that students in foster care are much more likely to move schools. For instance, in California, 34% of students in foster care moved schools at least once within one year compared to 5% among their peers (Burns et al., 2022). Many of the aforementioned issues pertaining to instability could be exacerbated for foster youth – especially when it comes to behavior and discipline. In a study examining the relationship between school change among a

sample of students in foster care, Sullivan et al. (2010) found that changing schools did not necessarily impede academic progress but did lead to an increase in behavior problems, underscoring our motivation to focus on discipline.

Students in foster care can face multiple dimensions of instability – the initial removal from the original living arrangement to a temporary placement, the potential transfer of a school of origin to another school, and, depending on the case, another round of moving homes and schools. Even after placement, students in foster care have a high likelihood of continued instability and reentry. Connell et al. (2006) examined how child and case characteristics influence the likelihood for each placement outcome, notably finding that reunification is less likely the more time passes, and adoption is more likely after around 9 months. Reentry and having multiple placements are also quite common. Depending on the state, anywhere from 24% to 51% of children in foster care in 2021 experienced two placements each year (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023). Once children leave care, they also have a continued risk of reentering foster care, particularly if they are infants or older teenagers (Wulczyn et al., 2020). Entry and reentry into care is a vital yet unexplored consideration for looking at how students in foster care perform at school, particularly around discipline.

### **The Link Between Foster Care Status and Discipline: Conceptual Foundations**

Conceptually, foster youth status and the heightened risk of experiencing disciplinary events can be understood through several interrelated mechanisms. The first is based on the rationale that certain behavioral challenges are more concentrated among foster youth—due to the developmental consequences of abuse and neglect—which increases their likelihood of experiencing disciplinary events. Rates of externalizing behavior problems in foster youth tend to be higher relative to non-foster youth (Casanueva et al., 2012); as a result, these behaviors

could trigger higher suspension rates than what would be expected among non-foster youth. In addition, foster youth must also navigate through broader structural systems that could make them more prone to disciplinary events: one prominent pathway as described above is through the instability of foster care placements. As noted earlier, youth with unstable foster care placements, including those who never achieved long-term placements, can experience more behavioral problems (Rubin et al., 2007) which heightens their risk for disciplinary events. In fact, entering foster care is a particularly sensitive period that can come with considerable behavioral risks (James, 2004). Beyond these two mechanisms which rely on individual-level behavioral explanations, the schools that foster students attend could also be relevant—notably foster youth could face a higher likelihood of attending schools where principals and teachers use more punitive disciplinary approaches. This explanation, known as the *between-school sorting* hypothesis (Owens & McLanahan, 2020), has been used to explain racial disparities in suspensions.

## **Method**

### **Data Source**

To analyze student discipline patterns, we used data from four districts within the California CORE Data Collective. This partnership of eight of the largest school districts in the state share a standardized data system that includes over one million students in over 1,800 schools. We cannot disclose any information about the specific schools or districts used in this study, per the data use agreement between us, our partner districts, and the Data Collective. Statistics used throughout this study are rounded to prevent the identification of districts. This data system has student-level data of public school students within these districts, including data on demographics, school characteristics, and student discipline. Each student is given a unique

identifier to connect data between different datasets and track the same student over multiple years.

This study examines the student discipline patterns of all K-12 students over the course of four academic years from 2015-2016 to 2018-2019. We exclude students missing data on student discipline, student characteristics, grade level, or school attended (less than 3% of total observations). We also excluded students with extreme attendance patterns, where students are missing more than 75 days (less than 1% of total observations). Our final sample included around 1,000,000 student-by-year observations in over 300 schools.

## **Measures**

### **Foster Care Status**

Since 2015, there has been a data sharing agreement between the California Department of Education and Department of Social Services (Burns et al., 2022). Through the California Local Control Funding Formula, districts receive supplemental funding to provide support to students in foster care, like providing transportation, academic tutoring/advising, school supplies, etc. The specific services offered to students in foster care vary by district. CORE data includes a binary indicator of if a student is in foster care in a given academic year. Students are designated as foster youth if they have been removed from their home (whether permanently, subject to probation, or voluntarily), remain in home while receiving court-ordered family maintenance, are a tribal foster youth, or have had an emergency removal (California Department of Education, 2023). Details of the foster care placement type were not provided in the dataset. Since students can move in and out of foster care, we categorize students into three groups: never in foster care (n=975,270), always in foster care (n=3,370), and switching in and out of foster care (n=10,610).

### **Student Discipline**

The data included four student discipline measures: 1) the total number of expulsions, 2) the total number of out-of-school suspensions, 3) the total number of in-school suspensions, and 4) the total number of other disciplinary incidents. The Institute of Educational Sciences of the United States Department of Education has a guide for districts on how to best analyze student-level disciplinary data (Petrosino et al., 2017). The guide distinguishes between exclusionary discipline where students are removed from the normal learning setting and inclusionary discipline where students are not removed, and no instructional time is lost. The CORE data system did not have information on the specific offense and punishment, meaning we could not ascertain if instructional time was lost for certain disciplinary events. Therefore, we use exclusionary discipline to refer to expulsions and suspensions and non-exclusionary discipline to refer to in-school suspensions and other disciplinary incidents. Our outcome measures are three separate binary indicators to see if students had any disciplinary action, any exclusionary action, or any non-exclusionary action. We then use a linear probability model to estimate the likelihood of a student having a disciplinary infraction. For ease of interpretation, we opt for a linear probability model over logistic regression for an unbiased estimate on our binary outcomes (Gomila, 2020).

### **Absenteeism**

We employed two absenteeism variables. First, we used total days absent, a measure of the total number of days of school a student missed in a particular year, as provided in the dataset. Second, we created an indicator for chronic absenteeism. Chronic absence is a binary measure of whether a student missed at least 10% of the school year.

### **Additional Measures**

The CORE data included both time variant and time invariant student characteristics. In our sample, student gender and race/ethnicity remained stable across years. However, English learner status, free and reduced price lunch eligibility, disability status, and homelessness status fluctuated between years. Additionally, the data contained school enrollment information, allowing us to create an indicator of if students moved schools within a year. Descriptive statistics for relevant student characteristics are in Table 1. The majority of students in foster care were Hispanic, 57% always having been in foster care and 64% switching in and out. While Black students only make up 9% of the total student population, they were 23% of students always in foster care and 16% of students who switched in and out. Further, we saw that students in foster care were more likely to have a disability, be eligible for free and reduced priced lunch, experience homelessness, and switch schools during the school year. We also saw that students in earlier grades had slightly higher proportions of foster youth (around 0.7%) than in later grades (around 0.5%).

## **Analysis Plan**

### ***Research Question 1***

To quantify the extent to which foster youth status predicted student disciplinary patterns, we used three within-person fixed effect models to estimate the likelihood a student would have a disciplinary action each year. We fit these models where the outcome was each of our three measures: any disciplinary action, an exclusionary disciplinary action, and a non-exclusionary disciplinary action. The baseline model can be expressed in the following equation for student  $i$  in grade  $g$  at school  $s$  in year  $t$ :

$$Y_{igst} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Foster}_{it} + \gamma_i + \varepsilon_{igst}$$



where  $Y$  is the discipline measure and Foster is the key predictor, a binary indicator of whether a student is receiving foster care services in year  $t$ . In the equation,  $\gamma_i$  is a student fixed effect to compare when an individual student is and is not receiving services;  $\varepsilon_{igst}$  is the error term clustered at the school level to account for unobserved school-level differences. The inclusion of a student-level fixed effects controls for unmeasured time-invariant student characteristics (health, family context, general motivation, etc.) for a less biased estimate. This first model only includes our key predictor to produce an estimated difference of student probability of receiving one of our disciplinary outcomes when they are receiving foster care services versus when they are not.

Our second model incorporates a vector of time-varying student characteristics. Any stable student characteristics (like student gender and race/ethnicity) are omitted from our student-level fixed effects models due to multicollinearity. This model includes indicators of a student having a disability, receiving free/reduced priced lunch, was homeless, was an English Language learner, or moved schools. Any of these other student characteristics could influence a student's probability of disciplinary action. We include these covariates in the second model to investigate the stability of our estimate and see if there is evidence of heterogenous effects.

Our third model builds upon the previous model by incorporating additional fixed effects, specifically school and a school-by-grade-by-year fixed effects. Both fixed effects take temporal context into account. The school fixed effect addresses school-specific unobserved characteristics, such as specific rules or enforcement, that remain stable from school-to-school. The school-by-grade-by-year fixed effect controls for any across grade variation of a particular time in a particular school. For example, school leadership that might take a strict disciplinarian approach might turnover, thus affecting the number of students disciplined. Additionally, schools

might also have grade-specific policies and different implementation across different years (Gottfried, 2015b). This more restrictive model better accounts for both observed and unobserved contextual characteristics to further reduce bias in our estimate.

### ***Research Question 2***

The relationship of foster youth status to student discipline might be asymmetrical, meaning the increase in student probability of having a disciplinary action when someone is in foster care might not be associated with an equivalent decrease when someone is out of foster care (Allison, 2019). Depending on the circumstances, leaving foster care could either restore a student to a more stable home thus reducing discipline or add further stress to a student thus increasing discipline. Additionally, losing access to certain services (transportation funds, academic tutors, etc.) could further influence student behavior and discipline. In our second set of models, we used a generalized least squares (GLS) approach to look at the decomposed differences in foster care status (Allison, 2019; York and Light, 2017). These models look at the difference in discipline with consideration to the amount of time students spent in each designation (receiving foster care services or not). Because these models consider each status and the time accumulated in each separately, we can estimate the magnitude and significance of entry and exit effects. We follow a similar analytic strategy as above by using a naïve model without controls, then adding controls, and then adding additional fixed effects.

### ***Research Question 3***

Student discipline among foster students might vary across student subgroups. We explored heterogeneity by replicating our most robust symmetric and asymmetric fixed effect models with covariates and additional fixed effects with the addition of interaction terms between the foster status indicator and the selected student subgroup. These models looked at

student gender, student race/ethnicity, and student age as proxied by school grade level (K-5 as elementary, 6-12 as secondary). These models demonstrate the extent to which certain student subgroups of foster youth have different disciplinary patterns.

#### ***Research Question 4***

To explore the relationship between foster services, discipline, and absenteeism, we used an interaction model, analogous to those used in research question 3. Namely, we interacted foster youth status with our disciplinary indicators, including covariates and fixed effects. In these models, our outcomes were days absent and chronic absence.

### **Results**

#### **Research Question 1**

As shown in Table 2, students have a greater probability of having a disciplinary action when they are receiving foster care services compared to when they are not. For each disciplinary outcome, we fit three different models fixed effects models to data. The first model in each group provides a baseline estimate by only including our foster youth indicator, student fixed effects, and year fixed effects. The second model incorporates time-varying covariates to make sure our estimate is not being biased by other student characteristics. Our final model incorporates school and school-by-grade-by-year fixed effects to further test if our estimate is being biased by time-specific factors (Hanushek et al., 2002).

From our first three models, we see that when students are in foster care, they have a 3-4 percentage point higher probability of having any disciplinary infraction. The magnitude and significance of this estimate on foster youth status is consistent when adding in additional covariates and fixed effects. The slight decrease on the estimate in model 3 suggests a slight overestimation of foster youth status in our baseline model. From the other two groups of

models, we saw that foster youth status was a highly significant predictor of exclusionary disciplinary actions. Our estimate of the likelihood of having an exclusionary discipline action was consistent across all three models. However, we saw less consistency when looking at non-exclusionary discipline action. After including school and school-grade-year fixed effects, the association between foster youth status and non-exclusionary disciplinary was indistinguishable from zero. Overall, these results indicate that students are about as equally likely to receive non-exclusionary discipline but slightly more likely to receive exclusionary discipline when they are in foster care versus when they are not.

### **Research Question 2**

After first exploring the relationship between foster youth status and different types of disciplinary actions, we then examine the dynamics between entering and exiting foster youth status on student discipline. In comparison to the first set of models in Table 2, the models in Table 3 have separate indicators for entering versus exiting foster youth status that also account for the time spent in and out of foster care. Once again, we look at all discipline, exclusionary discipline, and non-exclusionary discipline, starting with a baseline model before adding covariates and then additional fixed effects.

We find evidence of differential effects of foster youth status on student discipline. Foster youth entry is associated with a greater probability of all three disciplinary actions, albeit at slightly different magnitudes. Different dynamics emerge for exiting foster youth status, however, where exit is associated with an increased probability of non-exclusionary discipline but not statistically significant different for exclusionary discipline. Once again, we see mostly consistent estimates within each group of models. By including indicators for entry and exit, we

were able to tease out separate effects that were previously masked with a simpler binary indicator.

### **Research Question 3**

To assess if estimates varied across different student subgroups, we fit models that included interactions between our foster youth indicator and selected student characteristics. We looked at gender, race/ethnicity, and age (as proxied by grade level). Table 4 presents our results. We fit our most restrictive model that included covariates and all our additional fixed effects. We also fit both symmetrical and asymmetrical fixed effect models. The table displays only the coefficient on the interaction term between foster youth status and the relevant student characteristic (i.e., 0.029 represents the coefficient on the Male \* Foster Youth term in our first regression model).

We do not find compelling evidence of differential effects across student subgroups for most student characteristics. We do see that foster students in secondary grades have a greater likelihood of receiving a disciplinary action, particularly one that is non-exclusionary, than students in elementary grades. We saw suggestive evidence that foster youth entry and exit might decrease the likelihood of non-exclusionary discipline for Hispanic students. There is also suggestive evidence that male students in foster care have a slightly higher probabilities for any disciplinary action and exclusionary disciplinary actions than female students.

Lastly, we investigated the interaction effects of race and gender. In general, there was little evidence of differential results across student subgroups, except for Hispanic female students having slightly lower probabilities for non-exclusionary discipline during both entry and exit. Hispanic female students were also less likely to have exclusionary discipline. Hispanic

male students also had a decreased likelihood of non-exclusionary discipline during foster care entry.

#### **Research Question 4**

Lastly, we explored the relationship between attendance and discipline, where we predicted student absenteeism outcomes using an interaction between being in foster care and having had a disciplinary event along with covariates. Tables 6a and 6b show our set of models predicting the total number of days absent and likelihood of being chronically absent. We found that students missed around 2 fewer days and were 10 percent less likely to be chronically absent when they were in foster care compared to when they were not. We also saw that students with all three types of disciplinary events missed more days and were more likely to be chronically absent. However, we did not find evidence of an interaction effect, where having a disciplinary event while in foster care increased absenteeism at statistically significant levels. When looking at our asymmetric models, however, there were notable dynamics during the entry and exit of foster care. Similar to the symmetric models, students in foster care missed fewer days upon entry and slightly more upon exit. We also saw that students with disciplinary events missed more days. We saw suggestive evidence that students entering foster care who also had exclusionary discipline events in the same year missed around 2 days more than their non-foster peers without a disciplinary record and had a much higher likelihood of being classified as chronically absent. Foster students with any disciplinary event also missed around 2 days more than their peers, though these results are suggestive. Overall, these results indicate that the disruption of exiting and/or entering leads to an increase in disciplinary-related absences rather than just having disciplinary-related absences alone.

#### **Discussion**

This study was one of the first to investigate the relationship between navigating through the instability of the foster care system and student disciplinary outcomes. Given the long lasting implications of discipline on future educational and social outcomes, this study contributed to a growing body of research documenting the disparities between students in foster care and their peers. Prior research has documented that students in foster care are more likely to have lower academic outcomes and make up a disproportionate amount of the incarcerated population (Gottfried et al., 2019; Stone, 2007; Pecora et al., 2006; Beatty & Snell, 2016). Going beyond a simple comparison of descriptive trends, this study used a series of symmetric and asymmetric fixed effect models to examine the relationship between being in foster care on disciplinary outcomes as well as the extent to which entering into and exiting out of foster care influences that relationship. Transitioning in and out of foster care contributes to increased mobility among students that contributes to instability, which in turn, can affect student behavior, discipline, and attendance. With renewed interest in education agencies providing for students in foster care coupled but a lack of large-scale quantitative studies on the educational experiences of these students, this study addressed a critical gap in the literature.

Specifically, this study used administrative data on all K-12 public school students from four large districts in the California CORE data collective over the course of four academic years. These data included a variety of student-level data, making it possible to include variables and methods in our analyses to investigate the association between navigating the foster care system and student disciplinary outcomes. Prior to this study, few projects on students in foster care went beyond documenting descriptive trends, used rigorous statistical methods, compared students to their peers, and had large sample sizes (O'Higgins, 2017; Kothari, 2022). However, the California data uniquely connects information on if a student was in foster care during an

academic year along with a myriad of other student educational data. This data infrastructure was important for being able to address noted concerns highlighted in existing research.

Our results led to the following conclusions. First, we examined the extent to which being in foster care predicted student disciplinary outcomes. From the disciplinary data, we were able to look at any disciplinary event, non-exclusionary disciplinary events, and exclusionary disciplinary events. This differentiation is important as exclusionary discipline has been associated with negative academic outcomes and overall disengagement from educational institutions (Notlemeyer et al. 2015; Hwang et al. 2022). We used three within-person fixed effect models with a progression of covariates and additional fixed effects to predict the likelihood students had a disciplinary event with our variable of interest being if they were in foster care. Students in foster care had a higher likelihood of a disciplinary event across all three outcome measures with results consistent across models. Notably, students in foster care had a 3 percentage point higher likelihood of receiving an exclusionary discipline event. This finding is consistent with descriptive trends highlighted by the California Department of Education where students in foster care have suspension rates of 12%, while their peers have a rate around 3% (California Department of Education, 2023). However, by using a within-person design, our study reduces bias in the estimate by taking notable student characteristics into account.

In terms of research question two, we saw evidence of asymmetric effects, where entering into and exiting out of foster care had distinct associations with the likelihood of a student having a disciplinary event. When treating each transition separately, we found that entry into foster care was related to an increased probability for all three disciplinary outcomes. Exiting foster care was only associated with the increased probability of a non-exclusionary disciplinary event, at much lower levels than foster care entry. Once again, we saw consistent results across our



different models. These differential effects are consistent with what prior research has indicated about the relationship between transitions to new environments and educational outcomes. Family structure and mobility have been shown to play a role in children's cognitive and behavioral development and their attendance (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Gottfried, 2015). This current study is one of the few to consider the mobility among students in foster care on disciplinary outcomes. Even among foster students, mobility has a negative effect on student discipline. In the models that included a control for moving schools within the district, the coefficients were always positive and statistically significant. The lack of educational continuity can undermine positive attitudes toward educational institutions and remove students from supportive school communities (Welsh, 2017). It should be noted that while we can see these differences, there are many potential factors that need further exploration. Children enter foster care for a variety of reasons. California has different categories for foster youth with different entitlements to different programs (California Department of Education, 2023). Additionally, the amount of time spent in care and number of times in care can inform the likelihood of different eventual placements (Connell et al., 2006). Better understanding family context and placement circumstances could further bolster this work, as prior research has indicated that family factors influence student misbehavior and school discipline (Morrison et al., 2001; Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014).

Regarding our third research question, our results did not indicate that particular student subgroups in foster care have different probabilities of disciplinary events. We saw suggestive evidence of an increased probability for male students and secondary students, which is also consistent with other research (Kothari, 2018; Krezmein et al., 2006). We did see slightly lower probabilities for Hispanic students in foster care to have non-exclusionary discipline events,

though this trend might be particular to the demographic composition of the four California school districts in our sample.

Finally, for research question 4, we looked at the relationship between discipline and attendance. In our symmetric fixed effect models, we did not find compelling evidence of an interaction effect between being in foster care and being disciplined. In our asymmetric models, we found suggestive evidence that disciplinary events in the key transitional period in and out of foster care might lead to higher student absenteeism. Although the relationship appears tenuous, it does underscore the importance of considering each transition separately as we saw different strengths and magnitudes for entry and exit.

### **Limitations**

This study provided new insight into both research on the educational experiences of students in foster care and research on student disciplinary outcomes. There were several notable limitations to our study that can inform future research. Prior research has consistently underscored the heterogeneity among foster care experiences and the importance of localized context (Connell et al., 2006). As a state, California and its school districts have made the education of students in foster care a priority for over twenty years with a particular legal framework and guidelines. Further, the particularities of services and resources vary by district within California. Therefore, this study encourages future investigations using administrative data to better understand how district and state resources inform the educational experiences of students in foster care as well as test the generalizability of our findings.

Second, there was limited data on foster care experiences provided in the dataset. We could see if a student was in foster care within a given year and the broad category of a disciplinary offense. Future research would benefit from additional data to understand the

relationship between placement contextual factors and student disciplinary outcomes. California also has different definitions of foster youth with different entitlements, supports, and services. Having these categories would contribute to research on how resources influence educational outcomes for students in foster care. Lastly, data on eventual placement (reunification, adoption, etc.) would be helpful considering the role of case characteristics.

Third, while the dataset included rich, student-level data, our study was limited to annual trends, rather than being able to explore the timing and duration of foster care on disciplinary and attendance outcomes. Frequently, district datasets typically contain coded reasons for a disciplinary offense, which educator disciplined the student, and the date the offense occurred. Having these data could examine if the disparity in discipline for students in foster care is being driven by educator use of the disciplinary process (Lui et al., 2023). Also having daily attendance data would allow for studies to explore the impact of disciplinary actions on attendance in the days following punishment (Singer, 2023). If data also included state/end date of care, future studies would have more rigorous methodological options. Again, this limitation encourages increased collaboration between education and child services agencies to construct the data infrastructure necessary for this work.

Finally, this study provided broad associational relationships between being in foster care and student disciplinary outcomes, but future qualitative work could speak to why these relationships exist. Considering the importance of context, studies could better document the experiences of students and their families while navigating through the foster care system. In looking at more individualized experiences, it would be possible to speak to potential system-wide practices that address student behavior and disciplinary events. For instance, knowing more

about how students and families engage with specific supports and services would help schools, districts, and states design better, more effective programs.

### **Implications**

There are several key implications for policy, practice, and research. Thus far, there have been few studies to use large-scale, administrative data in educational research on students in foster care (O'Higgins, 2017; Kothari et al., 2018). Further, even less has been reported on how transitioning in and out of foster care might influence educational outcomes. Therefore, this study illuminates a new facet of the experiences of students in foster care. While the disparity in school discipline between students in foster care and their peers has been often reported, this study sought to understand the dynamics that might explain this gap. Prior literature has demonstrated that transitioning to new environments in childhood can lead to disengagement and avoidance, ultimately affecting other student outcomes (Gottfried, 2015a; Ladd & Price, 1987). This study has highlighted the ways that increased mobility and instability for students in foster care are associated with a higher risk of school discipline, particularly in the year of foster care entry. Across our analyses, we found that moving schools increased student likelihood of having disciplinary events and missing more school, especially so for students in foster care. Our results raise questions about the supportive mechanisms students in foster care receive in and outside of school, especially socio-emotional and behavioral supports. The entry period is a time of an incredibly difficult transition when students are facing instability. Educators need to be equipped to have the understanding and capacity to address the academic, socio-emotional, and behavioral needs of all students, including those in foster care. There could be professional learning, specialized staff, or a broader change in approach toward trauma informed practices. Schools should also work on quick dissemination of information on a student's entry to foster care to

relevant educators. To reduce educational disparities, educators need appropriate training and schools need to have a culture of support to meet the educational needs of students in foster care. In terms of research, these results also underscored the importance of considering entry and exit of care as unique transitions that students undergo. Future studies on students in foster care should consider these transitions in their analytic design, as necessary.

Given that past research and our study highlight the disparities foster students face, there needs to be renewed attention to the dynamics behind school disciplinary policies and enforcement for all students. Our subgroup analysis indicated consistent results regardless of additional student characteristics, meaning that these issues generally apply to all students in care rather than certain student subgroups. We also demonstrated how discipline is intertwined with student attendance. Reducing exclusionary discipline, like out-of-school suspensions, can be an important driver for schools to reduce absenteeism, but absenteeism is driven by the broader social and ecological environment, often outside of school control (Singer, 2023). In a practical sense, schools and districts could investigate local disciplinary trends among their students in foster care to examine potential reasons for disparities. For example, there could be an issue with educator behavior that impacts student discipline. In a recent study looking at racial disparities in discipline, Lui et al. (2023) found that the top 5% of teachers making office discipline referrals effectively double the Black-White and Hispanic-White racial gaps in a school district in California. Looking into who is making disciplinary referrals can help identify if there is a concentrated or systematic problem. Further, it is important to consider the offending behavior cited in the disciplinary event when considering these disparities. The same study highlighted that Black and Hispanic students were much more likely to have disciplinary referrals for behaviors described as interpersonal offenses or defiance (in contrast to violence, drugs, truancy,

etc.). These more subjective offenses rely on the perceptions and opinions of the educator, allowing for bias to play a role in decision-making. Analyzing trends in who is disciplining students and for what offenses would be helpful in unpacking why the disparity in school discipline among students in foster care exists.

Lastly, this study demonstrates the need for more collaboration between education and child services agencies to develop the data infrastructure to carry out more work on students in foster care. Up until this point, most research on students in foster care has analyzed self-reported survey data and rarely used administrative data (O'Higgins, 2017). Our study benefitted from an existing data agreement between the California Department of Education and Department of Social Services to identify students in foster care. Partnerships like these are vital to supporting future research and work dedicated to improving the lives of children in foster care. Because of this data infrastructure, our study could compare foster students to their peers and examine heterogeneity within students in foster care. Further, the data allowed us to consider how the length of time in care and number of reentries might influence educational experiences. This study encourages future research that goes beyond cross-sectional analyses to understand the heterogeneity among students in foster care.

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**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

	<u>All Students</u>		<u>Never in Foster Care</u>		<u>Always in Foster Care</u>		<u>Switched in and out of Foster Care</u>		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Student Demographics</i>									
Male	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.51	0.50	
Asian	0.11	0.32	0.11	0.32	0.03	0.18	0.04	0.20	
Black	0.09	0.29	0.09	0.29	0.23	0.42	0.16	0.37	
Hispanic	0.65	0.48	0.65	0.48	0.57	0.50	0.64	0.48	
Multi-Race	0.03	0.18	0.03	0.18	0.05	0.22	0.04	0.21	
Native American	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.06	0.01	0.10	0.01	0.08	
With disability	0.13	0.33	0.13	0.33	0.27	0.44	0.22	0.41	
Free and reduced price lunch	0.73	0.44	0.73	0.44	0.80	0.40	0.83	0.37	
Homeless	0.06	0.24	0.06	0.24	0.08	0.28	0.12	0.32	
English learner	0.22	0.41	0.22	0.41	0.15	0.36	0.18	0.39	
Moved schools	0.04	0.19	0.04	0.19	0.09	0.29	0.12	0.32	
N	989,240		975,270		3,370		10,610		

**Table 2: Foster Youth and Discipline**

	Any Discipline			Non-Exclusionary Discipline			Exclusionary Discipline		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Foster care	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)
With disability		0.04*** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)		0.04*** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)		0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
Free and reduced price lunch		0.02*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Homeless		0.02*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
English learner		0.01* (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.00* (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Moved schools		0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.00)		0.01* (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.00)
Student fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School fixed effects	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
School-grade-year fixed effects	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
N	909,840	909,840	909,800	909,840	909,840	909,800	909,840	909,840	909,800

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$



**Table 3: Entry versus Exit into Foster Care**

	Any Discipline			Non-Exclusionary Discipline			Exclusionary Discipline		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Foster care entry	0.07*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Foster care exit	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
With disability		0.04*** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)		0.04*** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)		0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
Free and reduced price lunch		0.02*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Homeless		0.02*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
English learner		0.01* (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.00* (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Moved schools		0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.00)		0.01** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)		0.03*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.00)
Student fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School fixed effects	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
School-grade-year fixed effects	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
N	909,840	909,840	909,800	909,840	909,840	909,800	909,840	909,840	909,800

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 4: Differences for Student Groups**

	Any Discipline			Non-Exclusionary Discipline			Exclusionary Discipline		
	Foster care	Foster care entry	Foster care exit	Foster care	Foster care entry	Foster care exit	Foster care	Foster care entry	Foster care exit
Male	0.029* (0.014)	0.008 (0.021)	-0.032 (0.020)	0.002 (0.011)	-0.027 (0.014)	-0.014 (0.015)	0.032* (0.013)	0.027 (0.019)	-0.023 (0.018)
Asian	0.022 (0.026)	0.002 (0.042)	-0.012 (0.041)	0.030 (0.022)	0.032 (0.040)	-0.032 (0.023)	-0.014 (0.023)	-0.053 (0.028)	0.003 (0.043)
Black	-0.036 (0.028)	-0.028 (0.033)	-0.003 (0.035)	0.008 (0.019)	-0.009 (0.024)	-0.019 (0.024)	-0.014 (0.025)	0.013 (0.034)	0.001 (0.032)
Hispanic	0.009 (0.017)	-0.017 (0.019)	-0.027 (0.016)	-0.013 (0.012)	-0.043** (0.013)	-0.030* (0.012)	0.004 (0.016)	0.000 (0.016)	-0.005 (0.014)
Multi-Race	-0.021 (0.030)	-0.040 (0.049)	0.036 (0.043)	-0.027 (0.026)	-0.066 (0.035)	0.052 (0.042)	0.011 (0.029)	-0.016 (0.049)	-0.003 (0.039)
Native American	-0.063 (0.090)	-0.057 (0.090)	0.002 (0.031)	0.002 (0.056)	-0.023 (0.069)	-0.048* (0.021)	-0.082 (0.082)	-0.072 (0.091)	0.027 (0.024)
White	0.036 (0.028)	0.034 (0.035)	-0.049 (0.031)	0.020 (0.019)	0.000 (0.028)	-0.017 (0.022)	0.017 (0.027)	0.027 (0.033)	-0.048 (0.030)
Secondary	0.041** (0.015)	-0.014 (0.019)	-0.047* (0.020)	0.035*** (0.010)	-0.025 (0.014)	-0.025 (0.016)	0.028 (0.014)	0.005 (0.018)	-0.032 (0.019)

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 5: Differences for Student Groups, Race and Gender Interaction**

	Any Discipline			Non-Exclusionary Discipline			Exclusionary Discipline		
	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care	Foster care
		entry	exit		entry	exit		entry	exit
Black * Female	-0.038 (0.033)	-0.031 (0.046)	-0.014 (0.038)	-0.004 (0.021)	-0.033 (0.028)	-0.026 (0.033)	-0.007 (0.030)	0.010 (0.045)	-0.019 (0.035)
Black * Male	-0.028 (0.035)	-0.023 (0.045)	0.005 (0.044)	0.017 (0.026)	0.015 (0.036)	-0.014 (0.031)	-0.018 (0.032)	0.013 (0.044)	0.014 (0.041)
Hispanic * Female	-0.023 (0.015)	-0.035 (0.019)	-0.018 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.011)	-0.031* (0.013)	-0.031** (0.011)	-0.026* (0.013)	-0.025 (0.016)	0.008 (0.016)
Hispanic * Male	0.032 (0.019)	0.010 (0.026)	-0.027 (0.023)	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.035* (0.017)	-0.018 (0.018)	0.030 (0.016)	0.027 (0.021)	-0.015 (0.021)
White * Female	0.036 (0.032)	0.058 (0.046)	-0.001 (0.039)	0.029 (0.022)	0.005 (0.034)	-0.018 (0.028)	0.011 (0.027)	0.040 (0.041)	-0.008 (0.036)
White * Male	0.033 (0.047)	0.012 (0.062)	-0.091 (0.049)	0.009 (0.028)	-0.004 (0.039)	-0.015 (0.035)	0.021 (0.043)	0.015 (0.058)	-0.084 (0.045)

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*

*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$*

**Table 6a: Predicting Absenteeism with Interaction Terms, symmetrical FE**

	Days Absent			Chronic Absenteeism		
	Any Disciplinary Event	Non- Exclusionary Discipline Event	Exclusionary Discipline Event	Any Disciplinary Event	Non- Exclusionary Discipline Event	Exclusionary Discipline Event
Foster Care	-1.804*** (0.344)	-1.563*** (0.332)	-1.846*** (0.346)	-0.100*** (0.013)	-0.092*** (0.013)	-0.101*** (0.013)
Foster Care * Discipline Flag	0.557 (0.454)	-0.867 (0.771)	0.830 (0.525)	0.031 (0.019)	-0.004 (0.030)	0.041 (0.021)
Discipline Flag	2.537*** (0.101)	1.275*** (0.101)	3.423*** (0.102)	0.046*** (0.003)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.068*** (0.004)
With disability	0.450*** (0.089)	0.510*** (0.089)	0.488*** (0.089)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
Free and reduced price lunch	1.056*** (0.086)	1.085*** (0.088)	1.051*** (0.086)	-0.018*** (0.002)	-0.018*** (0.002)	-0.018*** (0.002)
Homeless	0.713*** (0.151)	0.735*** (0.151)	0.713*** (0.150)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)
English learner	-0.080 (0.053)	-0.061 (0.052)	-0.074 (0.052)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)
Moved schools	3.467*** (0.371)	3.556*** (0.377)	3.431*** (0.370)	0.133*** (0.008)	0.134*** (0.008)	0.132*** (0.008)
N	907880	907880	907880	907880	907880	907880

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 6b: Predicting Absenteeism with Interaction Terms, asymmetrical FE**

	Days Absent			Chronic Absenteeism		
	Any Disciplinary Event	Non- Exclusionary Discipline Event	Exclusionary Discipline Event	Any Disciplinary Event	Non- Exclusionary Discipline Event	Exclusionary Discipline Event
Foster Care Entry	-2.919*** (0.512)	-2.529*** (0.494)	-2.955*** (0.502)	-0.143*** (0.019)	-0.129*** (0.019)	-0.144*** (0.018)
Foster Care Exit	0.798* (0.358)	0.790* (0.344)	0.910* (0.361)	0.062*** (0.014)	0.059*** (0.014)	0.061*** (0.014)
Foster Care Entry * Discipline Flag	1.444 (0.944)	-0.751 (1.570)	2.152* (1.049)	0.083* (0.033)	0.040 (0.054)	0.109** (0.036)
Foster Care Exit * Discipline Flag	1.941* (0.965)	2.464 (1.542)	1.914 (1.076)	-0.008 (0.033)	-0.018 (0.053)	0.015 (0.038)
Discipline Flag	2.534*** (0.103)	1.261*** (0.102)	3.420*** (0.104)	0.046*** (0.003)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.068*** (0.004)
With disability	0.456*** (0.089)	0.515*** (0.089)	0.493*** (0.089)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Free and reduced price lunch	1.058*** (0.086)	1.087*** (0.088)	1.053*** (0.086)	-0.018*** (0.002)	-0.018*** (0.002)	-0.018*** (0.002)
Homeless	0.711*** (0.151)	0.733*** (0.151)	0.710*** (0.150)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)
English learner	-0.076 (0.053)	-0.058 (0.052)	-0.071 (0.052)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)
Moved schools	3.464*** (0.371)	3.553*** (0.377)	3.428*** (0.370)	0.133*** (0.008)	0.134*** (0.008)	0.132*** (0.008)

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$