



HopeWell
CARE IN ACTION

Education Specialist, R.I.S.E.

BACKGROUND

HopeWell is the largest nonprofit provider of foster care in Massachusetts and Connecticut, serving approximately 1000 foster care-involved youth annually through a comprehensive, youth-centered and trauma-informed approach. Through innovative solutions such as My First Place™, an education and employment program that provides safe, stable housing, and case management support for youth who have aged out of foster care, and with collaborative partnerships among stakeholders in government, health care, philanthropy, business, and social justice, HopeWell is driving the systems change urgently needed to raise the standards of the foster care experience so that every child can reach their potential in life.

THE OPPORTUNITY

HopeWell seeks an Education Specialist to work toward closing the opportunity gap for youth in foster care from preschool through high school. The Education Specialist will collaborate closely with the Education Director and other inaugural staff to support the launch and growth of our new program RISE: Readiness, Inquiry, Scholarship, Education. RISE provides intensive, long-term, one-on-one tutoring and educational support for youth in foster care that also addresses social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Unlike traditional tutoring and educational support programs, RISE staff are paired with students, not schools, so tutoring and support remains consistent throughout the four to eight changes of home placements and schools that most youth in foster care experience through age 18. With a deep commitment to education, child welfare, and social justice, the inaugural staff will bring an entrepreneurial mindset to the challenges of launching a new program and growing it statewide and beyond.

The RISE program will start as a pilot in the fall of 2021, in the Greater Boston area. The pilot will address gaps in reading and literacy for students in foster care in kindergarten through 3rd grade while also focusing on social and emotional learning. In the coming months and years, we intend to grow to implement RISE to support students in all grades across Massachusetts and Connecticut, and to eventually partner with affiliate organizations across the country to adapt and implement RISE in their local communities.

THE EDUCATION SPECIALIST POSITION

This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to a growing team to transform what is possible for youth in foster care. We are seeking someone who is passionate about education, child welfare, and social justice and is enthusiastic about the idea of piloting, strengthening, and growing a brand new education program. The Education Specialist will have alignment with HopeWell's mission and will thrive on both taking an entrepreneurial and innovative approach to meeting youth's educational needs. This individual will have the strong ability and desire to work well with BIPOC youth. The Education Specialist will provide educational support and advocacy to youth in foster care. This individual will bring proven experience to the work of supporting youth's educational stability and ensuring that every student is connected with the resources that they need to succeed in school. This work will occur through direct support for youth and caregivers, (i.e., foster parents, biological parents) as well as close collaboration with other program staff, caregivers, and school personnel to ensure that all youth are receiving appropriate services needed to reach their academic goals. Much of this work will take place in person, in the community, either at the homes of youth and caregivers, or by attending meetings in school settings.



Education Specialist, R.I.S.E.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

The Education Specialist will:

- Assess youth educational needs at intake and in an ongoing way using a variety of techniques, including:
 - Communicate with youth, caregivers, school professionals, DCF staff, and other providers to learn about youth academic, social, and emotional skills, strengths, and areas of challenge. This may include conversations, surveys, and/or formal measurement tools (ie literacy skills test).
 - Collect data through observations of the child in a variety of settings (e.g. school, tutoring, home).
 - Request and review educational records and other relevant documentation (e.g. IEP, neuropsychological evaluation).
 - Evaluate services provided, youth progress, and educational data and reports. Develop recommendations in a format that is understandable to caregivers (and youth when age appropriate) and can be used for communication across the youth's team of supporters.
- Partner with youth and caregiver to identify and work toward educational goals that address assessed needs.
 - Collaborate with youth and caregiver to develop and put into practice a plan that outlines services needed to support youth's success. Connect student to external academic, social, or emotional supports as needed to address identified goals.
 - Collaborate with youth's Educational Decision maker to support appropriate school placement and ensure that effective educational evaluations and special education services are put in place as appropriate.
 - Communicate and collaborate regularly with caregivers and other program staff about youth's academic progress. Ensure communication is coordinated between caregivers, school professionals, and DCF workers in a way that supports coordination of services, monitors youth progress, and supports youth efforts toward their goals. This may involve taking on the role of convener or supporting the efforts of others.
 - Participate in meetings related to a youth's educational goals (e.g. IEP meetings, informal school conferences, best interest determinations, disciplinary hearings). Partner with caregiver (and youth when age appropriate) to advocate for youth's needs and goals and uphold youth's rights before, during, and after the meeting.
- Coach caregivers to advocate for the educational needs of youth in their care.
 - Advise caregivers and youth (when age appropriate) about services, programs, and accommodations that meet youth's individual needs. Provide external referrals where appropriate.
 - Educate caregivers about documentation, processes, and policies related to youth's academic progress (e.g. IEPs, school placement decisions, disciplinary proceedings).
 - Support caregivers with written or verbal communication they wish to engage in with the school related to youth's academic progress.
- Complete documentation including, but not limited to, intake paperwork and consents, needs assessments, service plans, case notes.
- Collaborate with other inaugural program staff to ensure alignment across all areas of academic supports; additionally, collaborate as needed around supporting individual youth and caregivers.



Education Specialist, R.I.S.E.

- Actively participate in program and agency internal (e.g. collaborating with colleagues, staff meetings, town halls) and external meetings (e.g. partnership meetings) both in person and virtually as assigned.
- Other duties as assigned. RISE is a brand-new program, and as such, the program model will be subjected to a continuous cycle of analysis and assessment as it launches. It will change iteratively as we learn more about how to best support youth needs, and as a result the roles and responsibilities of various team members will likely adapt and change as the program is launched and evolves.

QUALIFICATIONS

This is a list of qualifications that we believe will lead to success in the role. We understand that any one candidate may not have every qualification on this list. We strongly encourage candidates with lived experience with the foster care system to apply.

- Master's Degree in Education or related field.
- Knowledge of Massachusetts school-based educational supports, special education services, and disciplinary proceedings, as well as experience supporting youth and families.
- 5-10 years of experience in educational settings, preferably including at least 2 years as an educational advocate; experience working with youth experiencing foster care a plus.
- Experience serving youth who have experienced trauma and advocating for youth needs in a way that is student-centered and trauma-informed.
- Strong interpersonal skills; ability to build rapport and relationship with youth and families, school staff, and other professionals; ability to successfully engage youth and families and support them regarding educational concerns.
- Demonstrated experience collaborating with multi-disciplinary teams utilizing innovative strategies to overcome obstacles.
- Ability to evaluate and aggregate educational data, put together reports and summaries and present information to other stakeholders.
- Demonstrated understanding of and competence in serving BIPOC youth.
- Demonstrated flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit; thoughtful, curious, and open-minded approach to learning, growth, and change.
- Demonstrated ability to organize, plan, and prioritize activities, ensuring that details and daily program operations are effectively addressed.
- A high degree of effective oral and written communications skills.
- Must be comfortable working in community settings (i.e., family homes, schools, and in the community).
- Computer skills sufficient to perform essential functions.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Daily access to an automobile is required.
- A valid MA State Driver's License.
- Clearing of background checks as required by state and federal law.



Education Specialist, R.I.S.E.

WORKPLACE CULTURE AND BENEFITS

HopeWell has an unparalleled work culture, with an emphasis on diversity, belonging, inclusion, equity, and holistic wellness. At HopeWell, each team member is called to uphold and live daily the values of empathy, strength, learning, and integrity. HopeWell is an environment where we laugh and smile while handling serious, life-changing work.

HopeWell also offers a comprehensive rewards package that values employee wellness, work-life balance, and continuous learning. Benefits include student loan pay-down assistance, tuition reimbursement, funding for professional development, as well as a full suite of healthcare benefits, 401k plan, and generous paid-time-off.

To apply, please submit an application:

<https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Apply/757329/HopeWell-Inc/Education-Specialist-RISE>