



## **Foster Care Liaison Manual: *Policies, Guidelines, & Responsibilities***

You may contact the Achievement School District's Foster Care Liaison, Teri Manning-Euell ([tmanning@tnasd.org](mailto:tmanning@tnasd.org); 901.422.1749), for additional information concerning Foster Care Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

The “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)” contains key protections for students in foster care that are designed to promote school stability, student success, and collaboration between local education agencies (LEAs) and child welfare agencies.

Per ESSA, all local education agencies (LEAs) are required to provide needed services to Foster Care children. This includes having a local Foster Care Liaison who is charged with ensuring foster care children/youth enroll in school and collaborating regularly with the DCS point of contacts to ensure that students in foster care have the opportunity to achieve at the same high levels as their peers. ESSA emphasizes the importance of providing educational stability and limiting educational disruption by keeping children who move in foster care (due to entering the foster care system or changing placements) in their schools of origin, unless it is determined to be in their best interest to change schools. These provisions also ensure that, if it is not in their best interest to remain in their schools of origin, children in foster care are enrolled in their new schools without delay.

The ASD Foster Care Manual outlines federal regulations under ESSA and District Policies. The manual is intended to serve in defining, understanding and communicating ASD policies and procedures, identifying responsibilities, and providing guidelines in the performance of specific tasks. Please ensure that your school practices align with ASD policies and procedures.

## FOSTER CARE IDENTIFICATION & TERMS

### **DEFINITION of FOSTER CARE STUDENTS**

According to ESSA...

- “foster care” means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility.
- This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

### **DEFINITION of TERMS**

School of Origin

- The school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care.
- If a child’s foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of the placement change.

Point of Contacts (POC)

- DCS (TN Dept of Children’s Services) POC: Educational Specialists, Case Managers
- LEA POC: District Foster Care Liaison
- ASD Network Charter Operator POC: Network/School Foster Care Liaison

## ENROLLMENT & RECORDS OF FOSTER CARE STUDENTS

Remove all barriers to immediate enrollment and records transfer for children in foster care to prevent educational discontinuity.

Children in foster care who change schools frequently may not have the documentation required to enroll in a new school.

Therefore, enrollment must not be denied to any population of students because documents normally required for enrollment may have not been provided. Upon enrollment or soon as feasibly possible, a DCS Family Service Worker will provide the School with an Education Passport, including educational records.

**Enrollment of Foster Care students should be in accordance with the following:**

- 1) The child/youth with DCS documentation is immediately and appropriately enrolled in and attending the receiving school.**
  1. the receiving school understands the child/youth may be enrolled by the child’s foster parent or the child’s caseworker.
  2. the receiving school immediately contacts the child’s school of origin to obtain the relevant records and documentation.
  3. the receiving school ensures that the child is regularly attending and fully participating in school and receiving the necessary academic services.

**2) The School is responsible for ensuring that students identified as Foster Care (enrolling with DCS documentation or list provided via Nutrition Manager or other sources) are accurately coded in SIS/EIS.**

1. Access the "State Providence TN Page" in PowerSchool.
2. Click "HERE to Create/Edit this Student's Non-Lunch Related Classification."
3. Click "New."
4. Select "Foster Care" option.
5. Enter "Date" student was enrolled in your school.
6. Click "Submit."
7. The Student Data Manager sends the student's 44 Extract to EIS.
8. Verify that your data is accurate in EIS.

**3) The receiving school understands that DCS employees have the right to present their DCS Identification Badge in lieu of their driver's license. Access TDCS Memo [HERE](#).**

- copying/scanning of DCS employees' driver's license may cause safety concerns due to parents/caregivers under investigation possibly having access to their home address.
- schools with concerns about the identity of a DCS employee should contact their local DCS office (contact info listed on resources page).

**4) Student Records Release/Transfer**

- all essential educational records are released to DCS employees upon request and receipt of "authorization of release" form.
- the school of origin sends all essential educational records to the receiving school within **5 days** of receiving notice from DCS or receiving school.
- records cannot be withheld due to school fees (ex: tuition, books, uniforms, etc.).
- any debt payment should be coordinated with the DCS Case Manager.

## **BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION**

ESSA mandates a collaborative process in determining whether it is in a child's best interest to remain in his or her school of origin (due to entering the foster care system or experiencing a change in his or her living arrangement). ASD & DCS will take into consideration all factors relating to a child's best interest. These factors include the appropriateness of the current educational setting and proximity of placement. Transportation costs should not be considered when determining a child's best interest. The Best Interest Determination meeting will be in accordance with the following:

- **The DCS Education Specialist will notify the District Liaison** if there is a student who DCS would like to keep in the

school of origin, but who will no longer be living in that school's zone. The District Foster Care Liaison will then notify the appropriate parties to convene a best interest determination meeting **within 5 school days**. Meeting participants will include:

- a. The DCS point of contact;
  - b. The LEA point of contact (District Liaison);
  - c. The Network/School Liaison
  - d. The educational decision maker for the child or youth;
  - e. The school principal or designee; and
  - f. Any other key partners for decision making.
- When it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is in the student's best interest, the ASD Network Charter Operator and DCS will collaborate to establish the most cost-effective permanent transportation arrangements available for the student within **5 school days** of the best interest determination being made.
  - If a dispute arises, DCS makes the final decision of all best interest determinations.

## **TRANSPORTATION DETERMINATION**

When it is in the best interest of the child to remain in his or her school of origin, ESSA mandates that school districts provide transportation in a timely and cost-effective manner. In doing so, an LEA should consider a variety of factors, including cost, distance, and length of travel, as well as whether the mode of transportation is developmentally appropriate for the child. Within **5 days** of the best interest determination, the LEA POC, Network Charter Operator, & DCS must arrange permanent transportation services. Transportation to the school of origin must be provided for the duration of the child's time in foster care.

### **ASD & TNDCS Agreed Upon Transportation Plan**

#### **Interim Transportation**

- While the student's individual transportation plan is being finalized, the ASD Network Charter Operator and DCS will provide temporary, interim transportation to the child to ensure there is no disruption in educational programming.
- DCS will provide transportation during the 5 school days from the time the Education Specialist notifies the LEA's Point of Contact until the Best Interest Determination meeting is held, and for up to 5 additional school days after the Best Interest Determination meeting if the school system needs to make transportation arrangements in order to keep the student in the school origin.

#### **Assess Other Available No or Low Additional-Cost Options to Address Transportation Needs:**

- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator will assess whether the child is eligible for transportation as a related service under the IDEA or 504 Plan.
- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator will examine existing transportation options available for the student,

including incorporating the student into an existing bus route and other no-cost or low-cost options. Transportation will be provided and fully funded by the assigned ASD Network Charter Operator, if such a solution is available.

### **Options for Addressing “Additional Costs”**

When other options are exhausted and transportation will require “additional costs,” the following will be considered:

- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator and DCS will assess whether the child’s transportation expenses may be covered by other state or local funds.
- If the student is eligible for Title IV-E funds, DCS will seek reimbursement for the allowable portion of those transportation costs.
- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator will assess whether resources are available for foster care parents to provide transportation to a stop on the network’s existing bus route; provision of bus passes or public transportation vouchers; or a contract with a private transportation service.
- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator and DCS will explore cost sharing options, including contributing to match amounts needed to draw down federal reimbursement.

### **Resolve Remaining Additional Costs**

Achievement School District Schools and DCS will address additional costs with one of the following options:

- DCS agrees to pay additional costs; or
- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator agrees to pay additional costs; or
- DCS and the assigned ASD Network Charter Operator agree to share the additional costs.
- *If the assigned ASD Network Charter Operator and DCS cannot resolve a dispute about transportation costs, they will follow this procedure: Split the costs evenly unless parties can agree to another cost sharing arrangement.*

### **Timing of Implementing Transportation**

- The assigned ASD Network Charter Operator will have five days to put needed transportation in place after the best interest determination has been finalized. In the interim, DCS and the assigned ASD Network Charter Operator will jointly develop and implement a plan to provide the interim transportation needed to ensure the child’s educational stability.

### **Duration of Transportation**

- Transportation will be provided for the duration of the child’s time in foster care if it continues to be in the child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin.
- If a child exits foster care before the end of the school year, the transportation arrangement will be maintained through the end of the quarter/semester/school year to maintain the child’s educational stability, whenever possible.
- Transportation will be provided for the duration of the child’s time in foster care if it continues to be in the child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin.
- If a child exits foster care before the end of the school year, the transportation arrangement will be maintained

through the end of the quarter/semester/school year to maintain the child’s educational stability, whenever possible.

## SURROGATE PARENT

The IDEA requires the LEA to ensure the rights of foster care students are protected. The IDEA requires LEAs to appoint a surrogate parent for the purpose of special education. Schools must work collaboratively with DCS Point of Contacts and the LEA to secure a surrogate parent for a foster care student.

**A surrogate parent is a volunteer who is appointed by a local education agency, intermediate unit or the responsible early intervention agency, to assist children who do not have parents or family members.**

- The surrogate parent has all of the rights and can make all of the special education or early intervention decisions, that are usually made by the child's parents.
- Surrogate parents can review educational records; request and consent to evaluations and reevaluations; and challenge the recommendations of the education or early intervention agency by requesting informal and formal dispute resolution procedures.
- A surrogate parent does not have any rights and responsibilities for the child outside of the special education process.

## DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS TO ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

ASD and DCS should make every possible effort to reach an agreement to fund transportation. Both agencies must collaborate to ensure educational stability for children in foster care.

- **To address situations in which local parties cannot agree, local procedures are to include:**
  - The ASD and DCS must make every effort to collaborate in serving children in foster care. When a dispute arises between the agencies over paying the costs of transportation, the ASD and DCS must make every effort to resolve the dispute collaboratively at the local level.
  - If the dispute cannot be resolved, then the ASD, working collaboratively with the ASD Network Charter Operator, and DCS will evenly share the unmet additional costs when no other cost-effective solution is available, and all funding sources have been assessed and applied provisions to address how disputes will be resolved.

## FOSTER CARE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Family Service Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The case manager is the state-recognized custodian for the child.</li></ul>
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<b>(aka Case Manager)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees all aspects of the child’s case.</li> <li>Must attend all meetings, hearings, and medical appointments for the custodial child.</li> </ul>
<b>Education Specialist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as the <i>DCS point of contact</i>.</li> <li>Oversees the educational aspects of the case.</li> <li>Must be involved in special education meetings, Manifestations, Disciplinary meetings (School Level), and DHA hearings.</li> <li>Shelby County Education Specialists are <a href="#">Kissten Harris</a> (schools A-K) and <a href="#">Nakeisha Griffin</a> (schools L-Z).</li> <li>Davidson County Education Specialist is <a href="#">Jennifer Woods</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Foster Parent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides care and shelter for the custodial child.</li> <li>They serve as an extension of DCS and/or the agency.</li> <li>Upon 30-day notice, Foster Parents can request the child be removed from their home.</li> </ul>
<b>Agency Worker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversees all aspects of the child’s case.</li> <li>They are appointed by DCS and act as an extension of the DCS case manager.</li> <li>They typically function as the child’s counselor and have a wealth of information on the day-to-day aspects of the child, the foster family, and the foster home.</li> </ul>
<b>School/Network Foster Care Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as the school’s point of contact and acts as an extension of the District Liaison.</li> <li>Ensures that school staff are informed of policies and procedures as it relates to enrollment, student records, file transfers, etc.</li> <li>Maintains regular contact (in collaboration with teachers) with the Case Managers concerning the students’ attendance, academics, behavior, school/senior fees, etc.</li> <li>Attends all District Foster Care Trainings and submits required documentation/reports as required.</li> </ul>
<b>District Foster Care Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serves as the <i>LEA point of contact</i>, and the liaison between Schools, DCS, and SEA.</li> <li>Ensures that School/Network Level Foster Care Liaisons are informed of policies and procedures related to serving Foster Care Students.</li> <li>Coordinate and participate in Best Interest Determination and Transportation meetings.</li> <li>The District Liaison is <a href="#">Teri Manning-Euell</a>.</li> </ul>

## **FOSTER CARE SHAREPOINT RESOURCES**

<p><u><b>Professional Development &amp; Resources</b></u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASD Foster Care Training PowerPoint</li> <li>• DCS Education Training PowerPoint 2018</li> <li>• Education Passport</li> <li>• Foster Care Transition Toolkit.pdf</li> <li>• Foster Care Non-Regulatory Guide.pdf</li> <li>• DCS Safety Memo (work I.D. badge in lieu of driver’s license)</li> <li>• DCS Foster Care Act Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
<p><b>Federal Programs Requirements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Programs Monitoring Tool</li> <li>• Compliance Checklist</li> </ul>
<p><b>TDOE COVID-19 Guidance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Point of Contacts</b></p>	<p><b><i>District Foster Care Liaison:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teri Manning-Euell             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 901.422.1749; <a href="mailto:tmanning@tnasd.org">tmanning@tnasd.org</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><i>DCS Education Specialists (Shelby County):</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kissten Harris (Schools A-K)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 901.573.8219; <a href="mailto:Kissten.Harris@tn.gov">Kissten.Harris@tn.gov</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Nakeisha Griffin (Schools L-Z)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 901.573.8220; <a href="mailto:Nakeisha.Griffin@tn.gov">Nakeisha.Griffin@tn.gov</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><i>DCS Education Specialist (Davidson County)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jennifer Woods             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 615.218.8756; <a href="mailto:Jennifer.Woods@tn.gov">Jennifer.Woods@tn.gov</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><i>Main Offices of Department of Children’s Services</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelby County DCS             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 901.578.4001</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Madison County DCS             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 731.421.2000</li> </ul> </li> </ul>