

Louisiana Believes

Joint Foster Care Updates and Training

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LASAFAP

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Purpose

The Title I, Part A (Title I) foster care provisions in ESSA reinforce and complement the landmark Fostering Connection Act efforts to ensure educational stability for foster youth by emphasizing that it is the shared responsibility of education and child welfare agencies in promoting the well-being of children in foster care.

Major Provisions

- The phrase “awaiting foster care placement” was removed from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act’s definition of homeless children and youth;
- Children in foster care remain in the school of origin, unless it is determined that it is not in his or her best interest;
- If it is not in the child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child must be immediately enrolled in the new school even if they don’t have the required documentation.

Major provisions Continued

- LEAs must collaborate with child welfare agencies (CWAs) to develop and implement clear written procedures for how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of a child's time in foster care.
- Each SEA must designate a point of contact (POC) for CWAs. LEAs must also designate a POC for CWAs if the corresponding CWA notifies the LEA, in writing, that it has designate a POC.

Pre-K

If an LEA offers a public preschool education, an LEA must meet the Title I requirements for children in foster care in preschool, including ensuring that a child in foster care remains in his or her preschool of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. (See ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(E)).

CHALLENGES

Notifications

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) uses the School One Form to notify a school that a child has entered the foster care system.

Challenges:

- › Form not given to school, especially if child remaining in school of origin
- › Form not given to district POC

Best Practices:

- › Procedures developed for school staff to send School One to district POC
- › District POC should regularly contact local DCFS manager for list of children entering and exiting care.

School Enrollment

Challenges:

- › Children not enrolled immediately if placement results in school change;
- › Best interest determination process under utilized

Best Practices:

- › District POC notified prior to enrollment;
- › Training for school staff on legal requirement for immediate enrollment;
- › Review of district policies to ensure barriers to immediate enrollment are removed;
- › Initiate Best Interest Determination process if new school placement is recommended. DCFS final decision maker.

Special Education Services

- Studies show children in foster care are up to 3.5 times more likely to be receiving special education services;
- Research also suggest that children in foster care who are receiving special education services tend to change schools more frequently than children receiving special educational services who are not in foster care;
- One study showed that 75% of children in foster care made an unscheduled school change in one school year compared to 40% for children not in foster care.
- Coordination with LEA special education office regarding placement of and services for children in foster care critical.

Special Education Challenges

Challenges:

- › High mobility of children
- › Lack of timely access to records
- › Foster parents and DCFS have limited knowledge of educational rights of a student with a disability;

Best Practices:

- › District POC notified prior to enrollment;
- › Teams aware of the high mobility of this population of students can help increase the academic stability of students in foster care in the following ways:
 1. Document and share education records, intervention data and progress with other schools, if the student transfers.
 2. Complete educational evaluations in a timely manner.
 3. Prioritize evaluations for students in foster care due to the increased chance of unscheduled school changes during the school year.
 4. Document open evaluations in the SER system to help ensure seamless transition of evaluation completion and implementation of services
- › Inform foster parent and DCFS of their educational rights and responsibilities.

English Learners

- School districts must meet all obligations for children who are limited English proficient. These obligations include:
 - Identify and assess all potential EL students in a timely, valid, and reliable manner (within 30 days of enrollment)
 - Provide EL students with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful
 - Ensure that EL students with disabilities are evaluated in a timely and appropriate manner for special education and disability-related services and that their language needs are considered in these evaluations and delivery of services
 - Ensure that EL students have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all curricular and extracurricular activities

Resources

1. Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational stability for Children in Foster Care.

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf>

2. <http://www2.ed.gov/y/elsec/leg/essa/index.html>

3. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/12-0392dclhighlymobile.pdf>

4. <http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins>

5. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/school-policy>

6.

<http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/AreasofFocus/DataInformationSharing.aspx>

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https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/policy/foster-care-poc-contact-lists.pdf?sfvrsn=4952941f_4