



Procedures for Enrollment of Students in Foster Care

State Board LEA Policy 6505 lays out the broad requirements and expectations for serving students in foster care. As required by State Board Policy 6505 and the ESSA, each school district is required to establish and name a point of contact (POC) who will be the main liaison between students in foster care and the State Board's POC. The School District's POC will work with the State Board's POC on communication with the Department of Children's Services (DCS) POC. The School District's POC shall communicate on, at least, a monthly basis, but as frequently as necessary, with the State Board's POC on the implementations and supports required to serve students in foster care.

I. Points of Contact

Shelby County Schools Point of Contact (SCS POC)

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State Board's Points of Contact

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II. Enrollment

- Students in foster care shall be immediately enrolled, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.
- DCS representative will present an Education Passport upon enrollment as soon as feasibly possible.
- Upon receipt of the Education Passport from DCS, the school shall then contact the student's prior school(s) for relevant records.
- If records are not received within 48 hours of enrollment, school should notify the SCS POC.
- When records are not received in a timely manner, the SCS POC will inform the DCS POC.
- DCS POC will contact the State Board's POC if its schools do not receive records within 48 hours of enrollment.

III. School of Origin and Placement of Students

- Pursuant to State Board LEA Policy 6505 – Students in Foster Care, the school of origin shall mean the school a student attends when he or she enters foster care or the school a student attends when there is a change in placement address.
- If a student enters DCS custody or a student changes placement while in custody, the DCS Child and Family team will discuss if it is in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin. If the team believes that the student should remain in the school of origin, the DCS POC will notify the POC for the State Board to arrange a best interest determination meeting.

IV. Best Interest Determination

- The DCS POC will notify the State Board's POC 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. At this point, the State Board and DCS can schedule a best interest determination team meeting within five (5) school days that includes:
 - 1) DCS POC
 - 2) State Board POC
 - 3) Educational decision maker for the student
 - 4) School principal or designee
 - 5) Other key partners for making decisions
- If the student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan, then the relevant school staff members shall participate in the best interest decision process. For each best interest determination meeting, the DCS POC and the State Board POC will determine which of these participants must be present in-person and who may join remotely or

be consulted prior to the meeting in order to prevent unnecessary delays due to scheduling. This determination shall be made as quickly as possible to prevent education disruption, and transportation costs should not be considered when determining a student's best interest.

- Placement shall be determined based on the student's best interest. At all times, a strong presumption shall be maintained that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest.
- If the team decides it is in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin, then the student will be allowed to remain without tuition charges. Transportation to the school of origin should then be discussed by the team.
- If the team decides it is not in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin, DCS will enroll the student in the new school. The enrolling school will then contact the previous school for all pertinent school records. If the student will be transferring to a new school system, DCS Policy 21.19 specifies that FSWs will present an Education Passport to the new school upon enrollment or as soon as feasibly possible. The new school may then request official records from the previous school. DCS will contact the State Board's POC if its schools do not receive records within 48 hours of enrollment.
- Regardless of the school the student attends, enrollment must not be denied to any population of students (e.g. justice-involved youth in foster care, student with disabilities receiving special education and related services, English Learners, etc.) due to incomplete records.

V. Records Transfer

- When it is determined that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to remain in his or her school of origin and either no objection to the change in school is filed or all objections have been resolved, the DCS POC, the State Board POC, and the school's foster care POC shall work together to ensure:
 - 1) The child or youth is immediately and appropriately enrolled in and attending the receiving school;
 - 2) The receiving school understands the child or youth may be enrolled by the child's foster parent or the child's caseworker;
 - 3) The school of origin sends all essential educational records to the receiving school within 48 hours of receiving notice from a DCS representative or the State Board POC that the child will be changing schools;
 - 4) The caseworker verbally notifies both schools within two (2) business day of making decisions and faxes requisite

documents to both schools within two (2) business days of making the decision; and

- 5) The school of origin transfers all non-essential records to the receiving school within two (2) weeks.

VI. Transportation

- The State Board's POC will collaborate with the SCS POC to determine transportation options. If in the Child and Family Team Meeting through DCS it is determined that the student will remain in the school of origin and transportation is required, then transportation needs and possible costs for a student in foster care will be documented on the Transportation to the School of Origin form.
- If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the State Board's POC will collaborate with the SCS POC to determine how the additional costs will be paid.
- If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation that are the responsibility of the SCS, the school shall pay for the transportation costs either through general purpose (BEP) funds or other philanthropic resources. Title I funds may not be used to provide transportation. All no-cost and low-cost options should be discussed first, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Adding or modifying a stop to an existing bus route;
 - 2) Dropping the student off at a school bus stop on the existing transportation system for the school of origin;
 - 3) Using public transportation, if the student is of an appropriate age and has or is able to acquire the skills to utilize such option;
 - 4) Having foster parents transport the student to school;
 - 5) Utilizing pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the new foster care placement that cross school district boundaries, such as transportation for homeless students required by the McKinney Vento Homelessness Act; or
 - 6) Providing transportation under another entitlement for which the student is eligible, such as IDEA.
- As a part of the monthly calls between the State Board's POC and the SCS POC, transportation to the school of origin and the funds used to cover these costs will be reviewed.
- DCS will provide transportation during the five (5) school days from the time the Education
- SCS POC will collaborate with the State Board's POC until the transportation best interest determination meeting is held, and for up to five (5) additional school days after the best interest determination meeting if the State Board and the SCS need to make transportation arrangements in order to keep the student at the school of origin.

- ESSA mandates school stability and transportation necessary to ensure school stability until students exit foster care. The guidance from the US Department of Education strongly urges states to extend these rights until the end of the school year in which the student exits foster care.
- SCS will ensure that a student in foster care remains in his/her school of origin while any disputes regarding transportation costs are being resolved.

VII. Dispute Resolution

- If there is a dispute following the transportation best interest determination meeting over who will pay the additional costs for transportation, the dispute resolution team will meet. Members of the State Board and DCS will be included in the discussion, and the team will use the dispute resolution forms included in these procedures.

For questions or concerns not addressed in this document, please contact:

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