

## Foster Care Support Policy

### PART I. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

The School strives to provide educational stability for children in foster care by emphasizing collaboration and joint decision making among the School and custodial agencies to ensure that foster youth have equitable opportunities for academic achievement and social development.

Accordingly, the School will also emphasize the importance of keeping foster children in their schools of origin when their living arrangements change, unless it is determined to be in the individual student's best interest to change schools. Furthermore, should a school transfer be necessary, the School will work to ensure that students in foster care will be enrolled in their new schools without delay, regardless of whether relevant records are available, in order to limit educational disruption.

### PART II. FOSTER CARE SUPPORT POLICY COMPONENTS

"Foster Care" means 24-hour substitute care away from parents or guardians and for whom a public agency has care and placement responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to: placements in foster family homes, kinship care (when a court is involved), group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, and pre-adoptive homes. Foster care placements may be short- or long-term.

"School of Origin" means the school (including preschool) in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care or at the time of a change in foster placement. If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of origin is considered to be the school the child was enrolled in at the time of the placement change.

Foster Care Point of Contact means the Principal or his/her designee. The designated foster care point of contact will coordinate with the local custodial agency, lead the development of a process for making the Best Interest Determination for the student, facilitate the transfer of education records between schools where necessary, and develop and coordinate local transportation procedures to ensure the child is regularly attending school.

Best Interest Determination means that both the School and custodial agencies together have the flexibility to determine the appropriateness of the current educational setting for each student who is in foster care.

The School's Best Interest Determination must include, but is not limited to, the following considerations:

1. The child's participation in specialized instruction;
2. The availability of required special education and/or related services in a school other than the school of origin when the student has an identified disability under IDEA or Section 504;
3. The availability of language services in a school other than the school or origin when the student has been identified as an English learner pursuant to Title VI and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act; and

4. The student's ability to earn full academic credit, the ability to proceed to the next grade, or the ability to graduate on time;
5. School climate, peer support, supportive adults, and involvement in extracurricular activities.
6. The impact the commute to and from school would have on the student, based on developmental functioning;
7. Availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socio-emotional needs; and
8. Next steps to maintain educational stability.

Method of transportation and related costs will **not** be considered when determining best interest of the student.

### Transportation

The School recognizes that transportation to the school of origin is essential to the educational stability of children in foster care. Therefore, the School will collaborate with the appropriate custodial agencies to ensure the provision of transportation for children in foster care in a timely and cost-effective manner. Further, the School will arrange for the provision of transportation for the child to remain in his or her school of origin when necessary.

The School will arrange interim transportation until permanent transportation is put in place. Interim transportation arrangements will last no more than 10 school days (5 school days while the Best Interest Determination is finalized and 5 school days while the permanent transportation arrangements are finalized).

The Foster Care Point of Contact will work with custodial agencies to develop written transportation procedures that will do the following:

- Document the process used to identify which students in foster care require transportation to maintain school stability.
- Document how transportation will be provided, arranged and funded.
- Clarify the School's obligation to provide transportation when minimal or no additional costs will be incurred.
- Document how the School and custodial agency will address any "additional costs" (i.e., the difference between the amount School would otherwise spend to transport a student to his or her assigned school and the cost of transporting a child in foster care to his or her school of origin).
- Develop a dispute resolution process to address transportation issues.

### **PART III. IMPLEMENTATION OF FOSTER CARE SUPPORT POLICY PROCEDURE**

To ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, the School's Foster Care Point of Contact will work with custodial agencies each time a child is placed into foster care or when a child changes foster care placement. The The School will immediately update the student's foster care status in the ODE student database once notified by the custodial agency.

If the location of the foster care placement could result in a change to the student's school:

- The student will remain in the School until a Best Interest Determination decision is made.
- Except in emergency removal situations, the Foster Care Point of Contact will assemble a team of supportive adults from both the School and the custodial agency who are familiar with the student's background and educational needs to make a Best Interest Determination decision **within 5 school days** of the student's foster care placement. The Best Interest Determination triggers the inquiry about transportation needs for the child.
- The team will document the Best Interest Determination decision and next steps.

If the School and custodial agency determine the child should change schools:

- The student will be **immediately** enrolled in the new school and placed in class the same day that the child arrives at the school, even if records are not available. The new school will request the student's records from the School on the same day.
- The School will send the student's records **within one school day**.
- Permanent transportation arrangements will be made **within 5 school days** after the Best Interest Determination is finalized.