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## **Transportation Plan for Students in Foster Care**

The *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA) requires that school districts and child welfare agencies collaborate to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin, when it's in the child's best interest, during the time students are in foster care.

Under ESSA, transportation procedures for children in foster care must ensure that:

- Children in foster care needing transportation to their schools of origin will promptly receive that transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act; and
- If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the LEA will provide such transportation if (1) the local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the cost of such transportation; (2) the LEA agrees to pay for the cost; or (3) the LEA and local child welfare agency agree to share the cost. (ESEA 1112(c)(5)(B)).

### **Sequence:**

1. When a student is placed in foster care or changes residence while in foster care, the local Children's Welfare Division worker must notify the LEAs Foster Care Liaison of the current school of residence, which is the school of origin (SOO). If the new residence is not in the same school zone, the foster care liaison, at the school of residency, should be notified and invited to participate the FST meeting to determine what's in the best interest for the child(ren).
2. Upon receipt of the invitation to participate in the FST meeting to determine best interest, the foster care liaison notifies the school of origin transportation department.
  - a. The foster care liaison should provide the student's name, current school, new residence address, and whether the student has an IEP or 504 plan with specialized transportation.
  - b. The school of origin transportation department identifies potential ways that the child could be transported (see list of options below) if the BID results in a decision to maintain the current school enrollment. The information is given to the foster care liaison to include in the BID file.
3. The Children's Welfare Division worker, foster care liaison, and other essential members of BID share their information. A collaborative effort is essential in making best interest determination for child.
4. If the BID decision is that the student remains in their school of origin, the foster care liaison notifies the transportation department, who then assists the Children's Welfare Division worker in arranging transportation to and from school.

**Options:**

Multiple factors will be considered and addressed in the BID, when determining transportation options for foster care students, including: safety for the student and other students being transported; student age; length of commute; and distance. Information from the school of origin transportation department about these factors will be provided so that the BID will be comprehensive and will include consideration of cost-effective measures:

The following options will be considered to provide SOO transportation:

1. Use of an existing bus route.
2. Providing a bus voucher to the student in foster care to reach the nearest bus route for the school of origin.
3. Continuing existing specialized transportation included in the student's IEP or 504 or modifying slightly to accommodate the new address if within 30 miles of the SOO.
4. The Children's Welfare Division worker also should explore options outside of those provided by the school district, such as reimbursing the foster parents for transportation costs, or including transport in contracts with licensed residential treatment facilities.

\*Family Support Team Meeting (FST)

\*Best Interest Determination (BID)

\*School of Origin (SOO)