

Educational Requirements for Foster Care

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 - Policy: FOM 722-6
 - Foster Care Educational Stability Power Point
 - Education Review
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 - Foster Care Educational Stability Slides
 - Policy Review: FOM 722-6
 - Education Review
 - Case Review

- Instructions
 - Read the Foster Educational Stability Power Point Slides
 - Review the Education policy section in FOM 722-6
 - Answer the Education Review questions using the FOM 722-6 as a reference.
 - Complete the Foster Care Education Case Review with your mentor.
 - Retain the completed Education Review and Case Review forms in your field activity records.

Overview

Foster Care workers have a huge responsibility in helping children in care have the best opportunity to have educational success. The conditions that children experienced resulting in removal from their homes as well as the impact of placement changes can have an extremely detrimental effect on their ability to have positive experiences in school. For many children in foster care educational success is a positive counterweight to the difficulties of abuse, neglect, separation, and impermanence. Unfortunately, however, less than 70% of youth in foster care finish high school before leaving care.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are federal laws that provide children in care with certain educational rights and opportunities that they might not otherwise experience.

These laws and our state policies, when applied by caring and dedicated workers, give children in care the opportunities to experience the academic success they need in their lives.

Instructions

Read the Foster Educational Stability Power Point Slides and review the Education policy section in FOM 722-6.

Answer the Education Review questions using the FOM 722-6 as a reference.

Complete the Foster Care Education Case Review with your mentor.

Retain the completed Education Review and Case Review forms in your field activity records.



FOSTER CARE EDUCATIONAL STABILITY

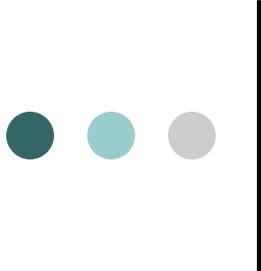
Framework and strategies designed
to improve education for children and
youth in foster care



Framework

- For the children and youth served in foster care, educational success is a potential positive counterweight to abuse, neglect, separation, and impermanence.
- Positive school experiences enhance their well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their ability to contribute to society.*

*Educational Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care, National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, December 2008.



Foster Care and Challenges to School Success

- Less than 70% of youth in foster care finish high school before leaving care.
- Children and youth have an average of one to two placement changes per year while in out-of-home care.
- Children and youth in foster care are at heightened risk of lagging behind in reading proficiency, repeating one or more grades, and being suspended or expelled from school (Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, Goerge, & Courtney, 2004).
- The average child requires 4 to 6 months to recover academically after each school change, therefore, it can be expected that FC children and youth who change schools multiple times will not only fail to recover but will lose academic ground (Burley & Halpern, 2001).



Sharing the Responsibility

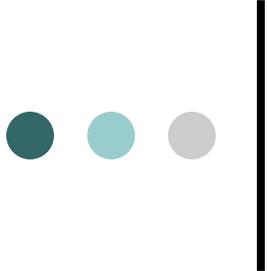
Child welfare agencies and schools share the responsibility for school success of students in out-of-home care.

How is this done?



Legal Basis- Federal and state law give children and youth in out-of-home care certain rights to remain stable in one school despite changes in their living arrangement.

- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001
- Michigan law now allows a foster child's worker to select the child's school. The selected school must enroll the child, regardless of the child's district of residence and without permission from the district of residence (2009 PA 186-187).



Fostering Connections Act

Educational Provisions

- **Child welfare agencies must include within the case plan assurances of the educational stability of the child while in foster care.**
- **DHS must ensure that child welfare agencies:**
 - Consider appropriateness of school and proximity to school of origin when making foster care placements.
 - Work with schools to ensure child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at time of placement.



Fostering Connections Act

Educational Provisions

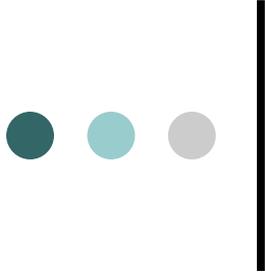
- If remaining in such school is not in the *best interest* of the child, the case plan must include assurances that the child welfare agencies have worked with the schools to:
 - Provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school; and
 - Provide all of the educational records of the child to the school.



Fostering Connections Act

Educational Provisions

- Requires states to provide assurances in their Title IV-E State Plan that every school-age child in foster care (or receiving subsidized guardianship or adoption payments) is a full-time elementary or secondary school student or has completed secondary school or is incapable of attending school due to a documented medical condition.



McKinney-Vento Act

The McKinney Vento Act is designed to increase school enrollment, attendance and success of children and youth who “lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.” Based on this definition, the McKinney-Vento Act applies to children and youth who are “awaiting foster care placement.”

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Homeless Education Office considers a foster care placement temporary, that is, the child is “awaiting foster care placement” until a child/youth has been in the care of the same foster parent for a minimum of six continuous months.



McKinney-Vento Act

Rights and Services

The act gives students the right to:

- Remain in their school of origin, if in their **best interest**.
- Receive transportation to their school of origin.
- **Immediate** school enrollment (even if they cannot produce the normally required documents, i.e. birth certificates, proof of guardianship, school records, immunization records, etc).
- Supplemental services (such as special education services, tutoring, mentoring, school lunch).



Collaboration Process



- Every school district has a local homeless education liaison, who must ensure each eligible child receives his/her rights under McKinney-Vento.
- The FC worker participates in the process by contacting the education liaison, talking with school staff, parents and caregivers, sharing the appropriate information and providing assistance as needed to ensure the child's educational rights.



Making *Best Interest* Decisions

- Children and youth entering care or changing FC placements are to continue their education in their current school, unless this is not in the child's **best interest**.



Making *Best Interest* Decisions

- **The local liaison and school staff always should be involved in the best interest decisions. Ideally, the local school can:**
 - Provide input on academic, social and emotional impact that changing schools may have on the child, the child's progress and services.
 - Help determine which programs at the 2 schools are comparable and appropriate for the child.
 - Provide information on the commute to the schools in terms of the distance, mode of transportation and travel time.

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***Best interest* factors foster care workers need to consider regarding school placement include:**

- The parent's or guardian's and child's school of preference.
- Educational input from school personnel and educational liaison.
- The child's:
 - Social and emotional state.
 - Academic achievement/strengths/weaknesses.
 - Continuity of relationships.
 - Special education programming.
 - Extra-curricular activity participation.
 - Distance/travel time to and from current school/new placement and the impact on the child.
 - Supportive relationships and/or services.
 - Length of anticipated stay in placement and the permanency plan.

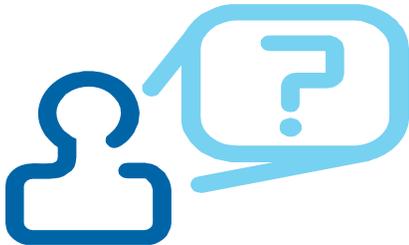


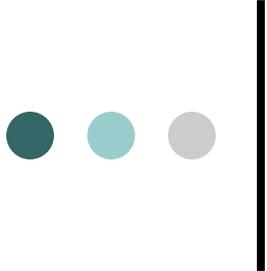


Best Interest

Other Questions to Consider

- How many schools has the child attended over the past few years?
- How would changing schools affect the child or youth's ability to earn full academic credit, proceed to the next grade or graduate on time?
- What schools do the siblings attend?





School Placement Decisions

- Must be weighed by considering the *best interest* factors.
- Are made on a case-by-case basis, identifying and allowing for individual needs and circumstances.
- Include coordination and collaboration with the local school district and the homeless education liaison.
- Are made by engaging the parent or guardian, along with the child in the school preference decision.
- The local school district must enroll the child in the school the FC worker selects.

NOTE: Under the McKinney-Vento act, a parent/guardian may appeal a decision to place a child/youth in a school other than the school of origin or the school the parent or guardian prefers.



Transportation



- Transportation is essential to ensure school stability and promote educational success.
- If it is in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, under the McKinney-Vento Act local education agencies are to provide transportation to the eligible children and youth. The local liaison and school district are responsible for arranging the transportation.
- FC workers must provide the information necessary in a timely fashion to schools/homeless education liaison to facilitate transportation.



Transportation



- School transportation is a significant expense and logistical challenge for school districts.
- Local economy may pose cost issues.
- Cooperation between education and child welfare agencies is essential to ensure the expense and challenges of transportation do not pose a barrier to the student in out-of-home-care.





Supporting Transportation

Taking a Proactive Approach

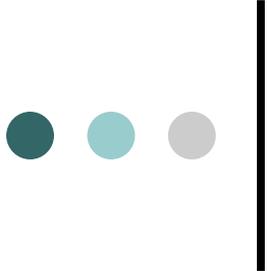
- FC workers need to work with the schools to develop cost-effective and appropriate transportation plans by:
 - Providing information on a child's move as early as possible.
 - Offering reasonable transportation options where possible (i.e. youth provided YIT bus pass to attend nearby school of origin, discussing transportation to school with foster parent/relative, asking relative if another relative could transport child to school).



Payment for Transportation

- As long as the child is eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act (as 'awaiting foster care placement'), the school district is required to provide transportation (including transportation costs).
- If the only method of transportation available to the school of origin is for the child to be driven by car and the placement agrees to transport, the school district may provide transportation payment to the provider via a gas card or stipend (each school district has own method). Although mileage may be paid by school district, the FC worker is responsible for communicating the transportation plan to the FP or relative and providing follow-up to ensure coordination.





Transportation Costs

Fostering Connections Act

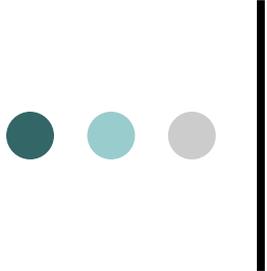
- When a child/youth is no longer eligible for transportation services under the McKinney-Vento Act and still requires transportation to school of origin, DHS will have the full responsibility for transportation payment and coordination.
- The Fostering Connections Act includes payment for reasonable transportation in the foster care maintenance payment (i.e. payment to foster parents).
- The DHS Federal Compliance Unit will provide payment direction shortly.
- FC workers must provide oversight to ensure FPs receiving payments under McKinney-Vento do not receive additional payments under their foster care payment (no 'double-dipping' of federal funds).

Immediate School Enrollment & Provision of School Records

- McKinney-Vento Act allows for the immediate enrollment of a foster child within the school even if school records or other needed documentation is not readily available.*
- Michigan law (MCL 380.1135(4)) requires a public school when enrolling a transfer student to request a copy of the student's previous school record within 14 days after enrollment.
- The sending school must forward a copy of the records within 30 days of the request.

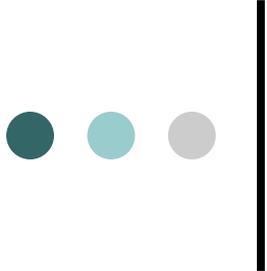


*DHS policy requires the child to be enrolled in attending school full-time within 5 days of initial placement or any placement change, including while placed in congregate care or emergency placements.



Required Documentation

- All educational information and related tasks, activities and contacts must be documented within the case service plan. At the initial placement or any placement change, the narrative within the case service plan must include the following:
 - In determining the placement, the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time is taken into account.
 - The best interest factors and the input of the parent or legal guardian, and the education liaison are used to determine the child's local school.
 - Verification that the child is enrolled in and attending school full-time within 5 days of initial placement or any placement change, including while placed in congregate care or emergency placements.



Documentation

- Verification from the new school that child's previous school record has been obtained within 30 days from enrollment.
- An initial assessment of the child's educational needs and strengths, based on information obtained from the Homeless Student Intake Form, educational assessments and through contacts with the parents, teacher, foster parent, child/youth and/or liaison.
- A reassessment of the child's educational needs and strengths each report period.
- Special education information, if applicable.
- Child's current academic performance.
- Description of provided services from school, parent, foster parent and/or others to meet the child's educational needs.



Documentation

- Discussion of the transportation plan.
- Document the child/youth's full-time elementary or secondary school attendance with a statement that the child is a full-time student, has completed secondary education or is incapable of attending school on a full-time basis due to the child's medical condition.
- For foster parents receiving a Determination of Care (DOC) supplement based on providing activities for education participation, detail the specifics for school collaboration and the actual tasks involved in the daily educational interventions required in the Parent-Agency Treatment Plan and Service Agreement under Foster Parent/Relative Caregiver Activities.

Education Review

1. A foster child may be home schooled. True or False
2. A Foster Child must be enrolled and ensured of attending with-in _____ school days of initial placement or any placement change.
3. Policy states that there are two conditions under which it would be allowable for a child in foster care NOT to attend school full time:
 - a. ...has completed _____
 - b. ...is incapable of attending due to the child's _____
4. A foster child has certain educational rights and protections under the McKinney-Vento Act if the foster child entered out-of-home placement of resides in the same foster care placement less than _____ months.
5. Foster Care policy lists eight examples of educational assistance and benefits under the McKinney-Vento Act. **List three:**

6. When a child is being placed in out-of-home placement, if it is in the child's best interest, the child should continue their education in the school of origin. True or False
7. In deciding the child's best interest in school attendance the foster care worker is to solicit input from:
 - a. Child's parent
 - b. Child
 - c. Local homeless liaison
 - d. School staff
 - e. None of the above
 - f. All of the above
8. Under the McKinney-Vento act, if the child continues attendance at his/her school of origin who is responsible for paying for the transportation?

9. A foster care worker has documented reasons that it is in the child's (qualifies under McKinney-Vento) best interest to transfer to a new school. Can the school delay her enrollment until all of the proper paper work is gathered? Yes or No

10. A school district has been paying for transportation services for a child under the McKinney-Vento act. The child is now in placement longer than six months and no longer qualifies under the McKinney-Vento act.

a. Is the school district still responsible for transportation?

b. Who is?

