

BUREAU OF *Federal* EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Foster Care Guidance

What are the Requirements for Foster Care in Florida Schools?

For children and youth in foster care, a change in home placement frequently results in a change in school placement. The educational impact of every school change is significant. Each time a student enters a new school, they must adjust to different curricula, different expectations, new friends, and new teachers. Keeping children in the same school: (1) provides continuity in education; (2) maintains important relationships at school; (3) provides stability during a traumatic time for the children; and (4) improves educational and life outcomes.

In an effort to ensure educational stability for every child in foster care, this guidance provides helpful resources necessary to assist the Florida Department of Education, local educational agencies (LEAs), and the Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) to fulfill their required responsibilities.

Florida Department of Education (FDOE)

- FDOE provides technical assistance to LEAs in implementing the federal required provisions.
- FDOE uses the Non-Regulatory Guidance Issued by USED and USDHFS to ensure educational stability for children in foster care attending schools in Florida.
- FDOE collaborates with the Florida DCF and LEAs to ensure smooth transition of transportation services to students in foster care.

Florida Local Education Agency (LEA)

Sections 1111(g)(1)(E) and 1112(c)(5) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by ESSA of 2015, require LEAs to follow the procedures developed with a state or local child welfare agency. The LEA point of contact may also provide transition services from one school to another when it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in the best interest of the student. These services may include providing documentation of the best interest determination to the receiving school, facilitating transfer of records, collaborating with the district Title I office on the implementation of Title I provisions, and performing other duties that may assist in the educational stability of the child in foster care as outlined in district policies.

Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF)

Child Welfare Agency (CWAs) and LEAs should collaborate to make best interest determinations, and the student must remain or be enrolled in the student's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the student's best interest to do so. The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) has drafted and shared with community-based care leaders a "School Stability Checklist for Children in Out-of-Home Care" that would help to document the best interest factors to consider during placement decision-making. The federal guidance states that the cost of transportation should not be a factor when making a best interest determination. The DCF point of contact list from the Office of Child Welfare by county and the phone number is 1-833-678-3735 (1-83-FosterFL).

Contact

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Title I, Part A
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Resources

[ESSA Foster Care Provisions](#)

["School Stability Checklist for Children in Out-of-Home Care"](#)

[The Florida Department of Children and Families \(DCF\)](#)

[The DCF point of contact list from the Office of Child Welfare](#)