



Procedures for Students in Foster Care

2023-2024

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Choctaw County School District to enroll, withdraw, and serve children placed under the care of the Mississippi Child Protection Service pursuant to the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Title I educational stability provisions.

Goal

Choctaw County School District in collaboration with Child Protection Services ensures that children placed in foster care have stability with regards to their education.

Mission

The Choctaw County School District serves the community by engaging each student in an excellent education that develops skills and citizenship needed for success in a global society.

Definitions (with Roles and Responsibilities)

District Point of Contact (DPC) – the person designated by the Choctaw County School District Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district. The District Point of Contact will communicate directly with the Regional Director or assigned Case Worker of Child Protective Services. It will be the responsibility of the DPC to ensure that school personnel receive training regarding foster care children and school stability and that district procedures related to these students are being followed. Other responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attend school
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes

Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS) – the person from Child Protective Services that will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact and with the Child Protective Service Case Worker in charge of the case for a particular foster child.

Case Worker – the person from Child Protective Services who has been assigned the case of a child in foster care.

Foster Child – a child for whom custody has been assigned to Child Protective Services by a sitting judicial authority.

Foster Parent – the parent(s) with whom a foster child is currently residing.

Procedures

Enrollment of a Foster Child

Resident Foster Children

Foster children residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled as any other student that resides within the boundaries of the district. The enrolling school shall obtain any and all records pertaining to the student's current education. A list of these records is found in Appendix A of this document.

Following the enrollment of the student, the enrolling school will notify the DPC, forward copies of relevant records and also keep on file. The DPC will keep relevant records until the student withdraws or graduates from the Choctaw County School District or the child is no longer in the care of Child Protective Services.

Non-Resident Foster Children

Foster children who are no longer residing within the Choctaw County School District boundaries shall be allowed to remain in the school of origin pending a determination that it is in the best interest of the child to remain. The DPC will meet with the Case Worker or CPS representative, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, and other interested parties. The meeting shall take place within 3 business days after placement has changed or CPS requests withdrawal. A determination as to whether it would be in the best interest of the child to attend a school in the Choctaw County School District shall be made immediately following this meeting. Choctaw County School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend the child's school of origin in order to ensure school stability except in cases where it is not in the child's best interest or not reasonable (due to excessive travel times or other factors). In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the CPS will be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The CPS considers other non-educational factors (safety, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan). The CPS also has the capacity to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties including the court in making these decisions.

New Enrollees

Foster children who attempt to enroll in a CCSD school may be enrolled by a foster parent provided they have verification. This may come in the form of the court order or a letter/form on letterhead from MDCPS stating the person is the foster parent for the enrolling student. MDCPS Case Managers and Educational Liaisons may also enroll a foster care student. A completed BID form from the student's prior school district must be presented before the student may be enrolled in CCSD. If it has been determined that it is not in the best interest of the student to remain in their prior school, the procedures for resident foster children will be followed.

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

The withdrawing school, in this case, is responsible for providing as many educational records as possible to make any transition from the school of origin to the new school a smooth transition. Records not on file in the school office shall be forwarded the new school within 24 hours following a request by the school or CPS. If the DPC has a problem with withdrawal or with scheduling the Best Interest Determination meeting he/she will notify the CPS Regional Director.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster care parent or Child Protective Services representative should complete a Free/Reduced Meal Application for Choctaw County School District. A paper application is available from the school office, cafeteria cashier or the School Nutrition Office located at the Central Office. Verification of foster care status will be done by Food Services through checking the SAMs data system. If SAMs system does not indicate foster care status, the school nutrition office staff will contact the school office to verify status directly. Parents who have a foster child are asked to complete a separate meal application for foster children. Parents are asked to include the foster child as a household member on a separate meal application if there are other children enrolled in the Choctaw County School District and the parents are applying for meal benefits for those children so that all household members are in the total number when the application is processed for approval of meal benefits.

Transportation Procedures

Children in foster care will be entitled to transportation services in the same manner as all other children in the school district. In addition to regular transportation routes, the school district will collaborate with the CPS when transportation is required to maintain children placed in foster care in a school of origin outside their usual attendance area or district when it is in the best interest of the student. The DPC will invite appropriate district officials, the CPS, and officials from other districts or agencies to promptly arrange cost-effective transportation for the student. These agreements will cover how the transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care. (*Transportation Agreement Form appended*)

Confidentiality

Title I foster care provisions allow data sharing to improve educational outcomes for children. CCSD recognizes that sensitive student information may be shared by child welfare agencies and commits to ensuring children in foster care are properly supported in a way that respects student privacy. In all cases, CCSD will comply with all statutory requirements to protect student privacy, including FERPA and any other privacy requirements under Federal, State, or local laws.

Appendix A

Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist

The following records (where applicable) are requested for enrollment of a child in foster care.

Supporting Documentation:

- Report Cards and Progress Reports
- Discipline Records
- Student Achievement
- Teacher Evaluations
- Attendance Records
- Written input from absent participants
- IEP and/or 504 Plan
- Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- Withdrawal From Previous School
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Immunization Form
- Other: _____

Records Checklist for Case Worker Withdrawing a Child

Supporting Documentation:

- Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- Current Grades
- Discipline Records
- List of student activities, if junior high or high school student
- Attendance Records
- IEP and/or 504 Plan
- Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- Withdrawal Form
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Immunization Form
- Copy of Best Interest Determination Worksheet (provided after school meeting)
- Other: _____

Records Checklist for Case Worker/Foster Care Parent Enrolling a Child

Supporting Documentation:

- Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- Withdrawal Form from Previous School if available
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Immunization Form
- Completed Registration Packet
- Completed Free/Reduced Lunch Application
- Verification Document for Foster Care Placement
- Copy of Best Interest Determination Worksheet (from school of origin)
- Other: _____

Rationale

BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT

Promote educational stability by ensuring that students in foster care can perform at the same high levels as their peers with limited disruption by first determining what is in the youth's best interest.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) stipulates that foster care students should only change schools

How to Make A Best Interest Determination

if remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest.

- If a change in school is being considered, the local education agency (LEA) and child welfare agency (CWA) must collaborate to complete the Best Interest Determination (BID) process.
- The MDCPS case worker or designee and the school of origin POC should engage in a conversation with the youth and any other appropriate parties to discuss the following information as it relates to the youth's educational stability:
 - Number of schools the youth has attended
 - How often the youth is changing schools
 - Home placement type/length as well as number of placements
 - Youth's involvement in extracurricular / community activities
 - The youth's academic/career goals
 - The youth's academic achievement
 - The youth's ability to earn full academic credits, participate in sports, graduate on time, etc.
 - The student's ability to receive necessary supports/services
 - What the youth wants, what the family wants, what the resource family wants, what CPS wants
 - School safety concerns
 - Youth's access to gifted or accelerated programs
 - If changing schools could affect the youth's end of year testing
 - Travel time to and from school
 - Biological family, resource family, friends, mentor, residential staff, MDCPS connections
 - Youth's relationships and connections to teachers and school staff

- The conversation will result in a determination that should be recorded on the BID Form. All parties who participate should be listed on the BID Form with the corresponding signature.
- Youth shall remain enrolled in their school of origin until the BID process is complete and a determination has been made.
- If the determination is made for the youth to change schools, the youth should be enrolled immediately in the new school even if the required paperwork is not available.
- The enrolling school's Foster Care Point of Contact (POC) will contact the school of origin to obtain necessary documentation.
- There must be a school of origin in order for the BID process to occur. With no school of origin, the normal school enrollment process will occur.

Is the youth's home placement 60 miles or more from the youth's school of origin? YES NO

STUDENT INFORMATION	
Youth's Name:	Youth's DOB:
Date of BID:	Current Academic Grade Classification:
School of Origin:	
MDCPS Case Worker or Designee:	Phone:
Youth's COR:	IEP Ruling? <input type="checkbox"/> YES* <input type="checkbox"/> NO

***A placement meeting should be scheduled with the new school's POC.**

DETERMINATION
<input type="checkbox"/> The student will remain in the school of origin. Reason for Determination: Name of School:
<input type="checkbox"/> The student will change schools and be enrolled in the school/district of his/her current residence. Reason for Determination: Name of School:

Participants
Only indicate who participates in the decision

NAME	RELATIONSHIP/ ROLE	SIGNATURE

Choctaw County School District
Foster Care
Transportation Agreement Form

Child's Name: _____ DOB: _____ Grade: _____

MSIS ID: _____

Custodial Agent Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

Educational Representative, if applicable (Name and Contact Information):

District: _____

LEA Foster Care Point of Contact (Name and Contact Information):

Case Worker (Name and Contact Information):

The custodial agency verifies that:

1. It is in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin based on the following factors:

2. Eligibility of the child under Title IV-E from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services: _____ Yes _____ No

a. If YES, reimbursement for some funding of transportation costs:

_____ will be pursued

_____ cannot be pursued for the reason below:

3. The following was executed to identify a no-cost or low-cost transportation service:

The district verifies that:

4. There is an existing transportation option that can serve the student's new housing placement.

_____ Yes _____ No

If YES, explain the option:

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that the most cost effective transportation procedures for this student will be:

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that while permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation arrangements will be:

These transportation procedures were agreed to on the following date: _____ and will be implemented within five (5) days, by the following date: _____.

Authorized Signature
Mississippi Child Protective Services

Date

Signature
LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

Date

Dispute Resolution to State Level Point of Contact

To appeal the district's decision to the Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, please complete this form and submit it by the date indicated on the Written Notice you received from the school. You may submit this form by any of the following methods:

- Scan and email it to TKersh@mdek12.org with the subject "Foster Child Dispute Appeal" to Toni Kersh, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact;

OR

- Return the paper form to Toni Kersh, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact at 359 N. West Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Student Name: _____

School in which enrollment is sought: _____

I am the educational decision-maker for this student, and I believe the school in which we are seeking enrollment is in the student's best interest because:

If you would like to provide additional information, please attach it to this form. The student shall remain in the school of origin, receiving all appropriate educational services including transportation, until the dispute reaches its final resolution.

Educational decision-maker name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Choctaw County School District
19 E. Main St.
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Foster Care District Point of Contact: Maureen Power