

Foster Care Plan

Marion County (047) Public District - FY 2024 - Consolidated - Rev 1 - Improvement Planning

Alabama Education Stability for Foster Students

LEA Student in Foster Care Overview

22 Number of Students in Foster Care (Enrolled for Previous School Year)

25 Number of Students in Foster Care (Currently Enrolled)

List Agencies in Collaboration:

Marion County DHR

Marion County Schools

Winfield City Schools

Policy Review and Revision (Describe how each agency in collaboration reviewed policies and the revisions made to policies as a result of reviews.)

Agencies meet annually to review procedures and the Foster Care Plan required by the Alabama State Department of Education. Necessary revisions are determined at that time and written into the Foster Care Plan.

The FY 24 meeting was held on 9/11/23 and attended by:

Kevin Dulaney - Marion County Federal Programs Director

Angela Wilds - Marion County Parent/Community Liaison and Foster Care Point of Contact

Jennifer Simmons - Winfield City Schools Federal Programs Director and Foster Care Point of Contact

Dwan Madden - Marion County Department of Human Resources Director

Describe Collaboration and Coordination with Agencies (Include a list of team members, positions, signatures, and agencies.):

Marion County Program Director Kevin Dulaney: _____
_____ 9/11/23

Winfield City Program Director Jennifer Simmons: _____
9/11/23

Marion County Point of Contact Angela Wilds: _____
9/11/23

Department of Human Resources Program Director - Dwan Madden: _____
_____ 9/11/23

The Marion County Department of Human Resources has a cooperative working relationship with Marion County and Winfield City schools. As mandatory reporters, local schools are familiar with DHR policies and procedures that deal with students. All agencies have been active in the Foster Care Plan development and revisions over the years.

LEA(s) Point(s) of Contact:

Angela Wilds (Marion County), Jennifer Simmons (Winfield City)

DHR(s) Point(s) of Contact:

Dwan Madden (Marion County Department of Human Resources)

LEA Student in Foster Care Responses

2 C. F. R. §§ 200.331(d), 200.328(a); 34 C.F.R. §76.770; ESSA SECTION 1111(1)(e) - LEAs must implement the Title I educational stability requirements of children in foster care, including ensuring that:

- A child in foster care remains in his or her school of origin, unless it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in that child's best interest;
- If it is not in the child's best interest to stay in his or her school of origin the child is immediately enrolled in the new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment; and
- That the new (enrolling) school immediately contacts the school of origin, to obtain relevant academic and other records.

Describe procedures for implementing the above provisions.

Marion County Schools and Winfield City Schools are committed to provide all students with sound educational experiences. We recognize that foster children are at an increased risk of grade retention, gaps in academic achievement, low high school graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment. These provisions promote greater stability for children in foster care so that they can continue their education without disruption, maintain important relationships with peers and adults, and have the opportunity to achieve college and career readiness.

The educational stability includes that (1) a child in foster care will remain in the child's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school and (2) if a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will be immediately enrolled in the school of residence, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

When a child is being placed in foster care, the DHR point of contact will notify the LEA point of contact to arrange transportation and schedule a meeting to determine school placement in the best interest of the child. DHR will work with the foster parent or a DHR approved volunteer to transport the child until the Shelter Care Hearing is held.

Assurances

- A child in foster care remains in his or her school of origin, unless it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in that child's best interest.
- If it is not in the child's best interest to stay in his or her school of origin the child is immediately enrolled in the new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.
- The new (enrolling) school immediately contacts the school of origin to obtain relevant academic and other records.

Committee

The committee will be comprised of the LEA representative and/or the Foster Care POC, and the DHR Foster Care POC and/or their representative. In emergency circumstances, DHR has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then consult with the LEA and revisit the best interest determination of the child. The determining factors that may be evaluated include:

- Safety considerations,
- Age and grade level of the child as it relates to the other best interest factors,
- Child's performance, continuity of education and engagement in the school the child presently attends,
- Child's special educational needs,

- Point of time in the year,
- Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification,
- Preferences of the child,
- Preferences of the child's parent(s) or educational decision maker(s),
- Placement of the child's sibling(s),
- History of school transfers and how they have impacted the child,
- How the length of the commute would impact the child, based on the child's developmental stages,
- Proximity of the resource family to the child's present school.

*** Transportation costs will not be a consideration when determining a child's best interest.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the child welfare agency should be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. DHR is uniquely positioned to assess vital non-educational factors such as safety, sibling placements, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan. DHR also has the authority, capacity, and responsibility to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties including parents, children, schools, and the court in making these decisions.

Enrollment of Students

Foster care parents, social workers or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in Marion County Schools and Winfield City Schools. The person enrolling the child will provide a court order showing that DHR has control of the child. It is understood that all necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) may not be immediately available and we want to provide a smooth transition for the student into our school system. We will contact the school of origin for the records and make adaptations as needed. After enrollment, the following guardianship or legal custody documents shall be provided for verification by the foster care family or DHR, within a thirty day period.

ESSA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i) - A description of how the LEA in collaboration with the local child welfare agency will ensure that in determining whether it is in the child's best interest to remain in his or her school or origin, and LEA takes into consideration all factors relating to a child's best interest.

Description of how the LEA will work with child welfare agencies to develop a clear policy or protocol on how to make best interest determinations including making every effort to gather meaningful input from relevant parties, in addition to required child welfare and school representatives, in deciding what school placement is in a child's best interest. Include a description of protocols in this description.

The committee will be comprised of the LEA representative and/or the Foster Care POC, and the DHR Foster Care POC and/or their representative. In emergency circumstances, DHR has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then consult with the LEA and revisit the best interest determination of the child. Information will be gathered and utilized from persons who have relevant knowledge of the child thorough collaboration between the above mentioned committee members. Any other outside agency information will be gathered using appropriate record requests or releases of information.

The determining factors that may be evaluated include:

- Safety considerations,
- Age and grade level of the child as it relates to the other best interest factors,
- Child's performance, continuity of education and engagement in the school the child presently attends,
- Child's special educational needs,
- Point of time in the year,
- Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification,
- Preferences of the child,
- Preferences of the child's parent(s) or educational decision maker(s),
- Placement of the child's sibling(s),
- History of school transfers and how they have impacted the child,
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ESSA Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Description of transportation protocols and procedures to include how additional costs for transportation will be calculated and funded as well as a policy for LEAs to resolve best interest disputes and interagency disputes related to transportation costs. Description must include how transportation and transportation costs will be monitored. (Include LEA and welfare responsibilities for providing transportation.)
Description of Dispute Resolution Policy

Marion County Schools and Winfield City Schools will coordinate with DHR and neighboring schools/districts to provide transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin. Mileage will be paid to foster parents and/or transportation volunteers based on the state mileage rate. A monthly mileage rate claim form will be provided for foster parents and/or transportation volunteers to complete. A county check will be issued monthly to the transportation provider. In the event bus transportation is needed, DHR and the school system will share the cost that the LEA would otherwise spend to transport a student to his or her assigned school.

Should a dispute arise, the Dispute Resolution Policy will be followed. It is located in the "Improvement Planning" section under "Related Documents.

ESSA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(ii)-(iii) Describe protocol for a child in foster care to be immediately enrolled in a new school.

Foster care parents, social workers or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in Marion County Schools and Winfield City Schools. The person enrolling the child will provide a court order showing that

DHR has control of the child. It is understood that all necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) may not be immediately available and we want to provide a smooth transition for the student into our school system. We will contact the school of origin for the records and make adaptations as needed. After enrollment, the following guardianship or legal custody documents shall be provided for verification by the foster care family or DHR, within a thirty day period.