

Foster Care Student Regulations

To Aid In Implementation of Federal Law

The Every Student Succeeds Act (“ESSA”) addresses additional protections for students in foster care and establishes a system of joint responsibility for school districts, the Kansas State Department of Education (“KSDE”), and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (“DCF”) to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care.

For the purposes of these regulations, “foster care” means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents and for whom a child welfare agency has placement and care duties. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child-care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

Transportation of Students in Foster Care

ESSA requires each Kansas school district to collaborate with child welfare agencies, such as DCF and tribal child welfare agencies, to develop and implement clear, written procedures for how transportation to maintain a student in foster care in his or her school of origin (when in the student’s best interest) will be provided, arranged, and funded. The procedures must ensure that the transportation will be provided promptly, in a cost-effective manner, and in accordance with federal law. Also, they must address how additional costs will be absorbed. Therefore, if there are any additional costs incurred to maintain a foster care student in his or her school of origin, the district will provide the transportation if:

1. DCF agrees to reimburse the district for the additional costs;
2. The district agrees to pay the additional costs; or
3. DCF and the district split the additional costs.

Upon request, the district will provide an assurance to KSDE that the district has transportation procedures meeting the above requirements.

Additional Costs

“Additional costs” reflect the difference between what the district would spend to transport a student to the assigned school and the cost of transporting a student in foster care to his or her school of origin. Title I, Part A funds may be used to pay for additional transportation costs in Title I districts.

School of Origin

The “school of origin” is the school in which a student is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care or of a change in placement. A student in foster care is entitled to remain enrolled in his or her school of origin unless it is determined not to be in the student’s best interest to stay at that school.

Best-Interest Determination

DCF will make the final decision regarding whether it is in a student’s best interest to remain in the school of origin. District staff may be asked to provide information on the “educational best interest” of the student to support educational decision-making based on what is best for the student academically. For students receiving special education and related services under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act or for students on Section 504 accommodation plans, it is recommended that relevant team members should be consulted in the best interest determination process, as the district will still be required to ensure compliance with Least Restrictive Environment requirements.

The United States Department of Education has provided a list of factors that may be considered in determining the student's educational best interest, which include appropriateness of the current setting, proximity of placement to school attendance centers, the child's preference, the parents' preference, the child's attachment to the school of origin, where siblings will be placed, and the availability of needed services. The "best-interest determination" may not be made based on transportation costs or funding.

District Foster Care Liaison

The "district foster care liaison" is the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning who facilitates the enrollment in or transfer to a public school of a student in the district who is a ward of the state. The district's foster care liaison is considered the designated point of contact for collaboration with DCF on transportation procedures.

Child Welfare Agency

In Kansas, DCF is the regular child welfare agency for collaboration on transportation procedures. The Child Protective Services ("CPS") division of DCF will typically be the division that works with the district on issues related to students in foster care, however, tribal child welfare agencies may also be involved with this process. Therefore, whenever DCF is used in these regulations, it may be deemed to apply to any child welfare agency based on the circumstances.

Child Welfare Contact

The district, if receiving Title I, Part A funds, must collaborate on transportation procedures with the DCF-designated contact if DCF notifies the district in writing that DCF has designated an employee to serve as a point of contact for the district.

Approved: August 7, 2017