

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

September 13, 2011

M E M O R A N D U M

<u>What's Inside:</u> Improving Educational Opportunities for Foster Children
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TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: CANDACE A. SHIVELY, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to help staff understand their role in helping children and youth succeed in school. Whether school experiences are positive or negative—it is undeniable that school plays an important role in the lives of children. Children in foster care should be given the same educational opportunities as those children not involved in the foster care system.

KEY FACTORS TO EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS:

- **Establish a good working relationship with school personnel-** Staff can advocate for child(ren) in the educational system by communicating regularly with the educational personnel at the school;
- **Ask questions** - Asking questions about a child's education can make a difference. By asking questions, you are conveying to the school someone is looking out for the child;
- **Follow up-** Being a good advocate involves not only letting educators know what you think a student needs and working out a solution with them, but also following up to make sure what's decided is fully implemented; and
- **Documentation** - Keep good educational records, review them regularly, and keep them up to date. Especially for children in special education, there will be a lot of paperwork to organize. Obtain necessary releases and set up clear procedures with the school and the foster parent for receiving copies of report cards, IEP minutes, etc.

EDUCATION RECORDS

Keeping educational records is necessary for educational stability of foster children. Educational information is assessed and captured in the usage of the Child Assessment and Service Plan (CS-1) and the Family Functioning Assessment/ReAssessment (CD14a). Additionally, staff are required to include in a child's case file the following:

- Name and address of current school provider;
- Child's current grade level performance (Grade Card);
- Child's school record history (previous schools of attendance);
- Educational needs, including but not limited to: special education documents and summaries of efforts to address those needs;
- Educational plans based on individual need, including an IEP; and
- School pictures for each school year.

FREE NUTRITIONAL FOOD ACCESS

An important provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (the Act), Public Law 111-296, provides categorical eligibility for free meals to foster children. The Act, in Section 102, amends a key provision of the National School Lunch Act to make any foster child categorically eligible, without the necessity of an application, for free school meals. The Children's Division will need to provide the school or other child nutrition program institution documentation indicating the child as a foster child whose care and placement is the responsibility of the State.

An [educational enrollment letter \(CD-179\)](#) has been developed for staff and resource providers to use as documentation to allow a foster child to be categorically eligible for free meals without further application. The educational enrollment letter (CD-179) also provides pertinent information to facilitate enrollment and improve communication between the school, the resource provider and CD staff. Included is contact information for the Children's Division staff and the child(ren)'s resource provider, instructions on who to contact in an emergency, to who the school is to send the child (ren)'s report card, etc. Information such as this should be provided at the time a child(ren) is enrolled in school and updates given as changes occur. The educational enrollment letter (CD-179) is available under the reference documents and resources section of the Children's Division E-forms.

The Child Welfare Manual has been updated to reflect the information outlined in this memorandum.

NECESSARY ACTION

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.
2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below.
3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to:

PDS CONTACT Crystal Wilson 573-522-9306 Crystal.L.Wilson@dss.mo.gov	PROGRAM MANAGER Amy Martin 573-751-3171 Amy.L.Martin@dss.mo.gov
CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS Section 4 Chapter 7.3.8 Educational Support and Intervention	
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS N/A	
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES Educational Enrollment Letter (CD-179)	
RELATED STATUTE Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 Foster Care Education Bill of Rights Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (the Act), Public Law 111-296	
ADMINISTRATIVE RULE N/A	
COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS FC 3 , 8 th Edition COA Standards	
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR) Item 21, Educational Needs of Children	
<u>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</u> Social Connections Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Concrete Support in Times of Need Social and Emotional Competence of Children	
FACES REQUIREMENTS N/A	