

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

## CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

May 22, 2017

## M E M O R A N D U M

TO: CHILDREN'S DIVISION AND CONTRACTED STAFF

FROM: TIM DECKER, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: POLICY REVISIONS RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL STABILITY AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

## DISCUSSION:

This memorandum introduces revisions to the [Educational Stability and Support](#) policy that reflect the key protections for students in foster care to promote school stability and success as authorized by the federal education law, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015). Also revised are the Educational Enrollment Letter (CD-179) and policy regarding its use, as well as policy modifying the allowable reimbursement to resource parents for education-related travel expenses.

**Every Student Succeeds Act**

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is a federal education law requiring educational agencies to collaborate with child welfare agencies to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care. ESSA complements the federal child welfare law, *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* of 2008, creating reciprocal obligations and shared decision-making. Key protections for students in foster care include:

- Child remains in the same school when in the child's best interest
- Immediate enrollment in school and transfer of school records
- School transportation when necessary
- Point of contact designated within the state educational agency (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - DESE)
- Local educational agency (LEA) point of contact
- Required data collection and reporting on student achievement and graduation rates for students in foster care

## **School Placement**

Students in foster care who experience placement moves must be allowed to remain in their school of origin, unless it is determined not to be in their best interest. School of origin can be defined as the specific school within a district the child attended when he/she was placed in out-of-home care, or the child's school of enrollment at the time of any subsequent placement change.

In determining the child's school placement, ESSA requires the school of origin to complete a Best Interest Determination (BID) with the Children's Division. It is, therefore, important staff notify and engage the school of origin immediately when a child enters out-of-home care, when a child already in care has a planned or impending placement change, or when a child has experienced an emergency change of placement. Because a Family Support Team Meeting (FSTM) is required in each of these situations, staff should invite the school liaison or designee to the FSTM where school placement is discussed and a best interest determination is being made. DESE maintains a list of [school liaisons](#) on its website. Children's Division and Department of Secondary and Elementary Education have agreed that any dispute as to the best interest determination and school placement will be resolved by deferring to the child's Family Support Team.

## **School Transportation**

ESSA prohibits schools from factoring transportation logistics and cost into the best interest determination process for a child's school placement. Children's Division and the local education agency (LEA) should discuss a transportation plan for each child remaining in their school of origin. Transportation plans may vary by district and by child and may be renegotiated when necessary. Transportation options to consider are outlined in the Child Welfare Manual, but staff and LEAs should explore all possible options. NOTE: If the student has an IEP that includes provisions for specialized transportation, transportation must be provided by the school district responsible for the student's Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

## **Educational Enrollment Letter (CD-179)**

The Educational Enrollment Letter (CD-179) has been updated and is now required to be provided to the school upon a foster child's enrollment, or when a child already enrolled in school enters out-of-home care. Immediately notifying the school of a child's foster care status is imperative to their educational stability and well-being, allowing for swift enrollment and timely transfer of records, as well as preparing school personnel to be cognizant of the child's need for a uniquely supportive and trauma-sensitive environment. Additionally, new foster care provisions in the ESSA require schools to report annually on academic achievement and graduation rates for children in foster care as a separate subgroup. Prompt notification allows schools to begin tracking required data early, resulting in a more accurate illustration of how foster youth are performing compared to their peers not in foster care.

Revisions to the CD-179 include the ability to provide additional information or special instruction, and text informing the school that the child's placement provider is the child's educational decision-maker unless otherwise indicated.

**Resource Provider Reimbursement for Education-Related Travel Expenses (TRED)**

Policy has been revised to allow all resource parents to receive reimbursement at the current state mileage rate for each mile traveled to and from the child's school of origin. Resource parents, however, may not be paid mileage for their commute to or from their place of employment. When transporting youth to or from their school of origin involves a shared route with the resource parent's commute to work, only the additional mileage incurred transporting the child to the school of origin may be claimed and reimbursed. Full mileage will be reimbursed if the resource parent did not report to work the day being claimed. All resource parents, including Level B providers, requesting reimbursement for education-related travel expenses to maintain the child in his/her school of origin will use the Travel Expense Log (CD-106). Mileage will be reimbursed using service code TRED.

<p><b>NECESSARY ACTION</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.</li> <li>2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below.</li> <li>3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to:</li> </ol>	
<p><b>PDS CONTACT</b>                  Lori Masek                  573-751-4344  <a href="mailto:Lori.Masek@dss.mo.gov">Lori.Masek@dss.mo.gov</a></p> <p>Elizabeth Tattershall                  573-522-1191  <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.Tattershall@dss.mo.gov">Elizabeth.Tattershall@dss.mo.gov</a></p>	<p><b>MANAGER CONTACT</b>                  Ivy Doxley                  573-526-1422  <a href="mailto:Ivy.C.Doxley@dss.mo.gov">Ivy.C.Doxley@dss.mo.gov</a></p> <p>Amy Martin                  573-526-8040  <a href="mailto:Amy.L.Martin@dss.mo.gov">Amy.L.Martin@dss.mo.gov</a></p>
<p><b>CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS</b>  <a href="#">Section 4 Chapter 31: Educational Stability and Support</a>  <a href="#">Section 4 Chapter 11 Attachment C: Financial Support Planning Special Expenses Payment</a></p>	
<p><b>FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS</b>  <a href="#">CD-179 Education Enrollment Letter</a>  <a href="#">CD-106 Travel Expense Log for Children in Foster Care</a></p>	
<p><b>REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES</b>  <a href="#">ESSA Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care</a>  <a href="#">ESSA Transportation Guidance for Students in Foster Care</a>  <a href="#">ESSA Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form</a></p>	

