South Carolina Department of Education

**Foster Roster**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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1. **Question**: What is the Foster Roster?

**Answer**: Coding of foster care students correctly in PowerSchool is very important for funding and accountability purposes.  To assist districts, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), Office of Research and Data Analysis (ORDA), has generated a list of PowerSchool students who match to a list of foster care students provided by the South Carolina Department of Social Services.  Keep in mind that once a student is correctly coded as foster care in PowerSchool, that student must remain coded as foster care for the remainder of the school year, even if he/she is no longer in foster care.

1. **Question**: How is the Foster Roster Created?

**Answer**: The SCDE/ORDA uses the Department of Social Services (DSS) Foster Care monthly data file to match to PowerSchool/Escholar (SUNS) student data collected from districts.

1. DSS data are matched to student data collected in the SUNS Master database in order to locate the child’s assigned state\_studentnumber (state identification number/SUNS id).
2. The state identification numbers were then used to match to the PowerSchool data collected in the current Data Collection for active and inactive students. The students are matched using a combination of data elements, including name, date of birth, address, and social security number.   If the student matches on a minimum of two of these items, the student will be flagged as a “match” and included in the file. (Note: Potentially, students with no state\_studentnumber may not be matched. Therefore, it is important that all students have accurate state\_studentnumber (SUNS id’s).)
3. Only the district/school will be able to confirm the identity of the students from both files.  Please check the students in the file closely.
4. **Question**: How often should I receive a Foster Roster?

**Answer**: The SCDE/ORDA produces a Foster Roster monthly for the months of August through April. Because the SCDE/ORDA receives the data from DSS at the beginning of each month, there is always a lag in reporting (e.g., August data would be distributed in September). The files are compiled as close to receipt of the DSS data as possible, usually within a week of receipt for distribution by the middle of the month.

Counts are produced and submitted to the SCDE Office of Federal and State Accountability and SCDE Office of Finance for distribution approval. Once approved for distribution by these offices, the SCDE/ORDA upload the data to the Advanced Data Transfer system (ADT) and district contacts are alerted to the availability of the data files. Delays in distribution can be expected during funding collections.

1. **Question**: Where can I find the Foster Roster(s) for my district?

**Answer**: The Foster Roster is loaded to the Advanced Data Transfer system (ADT) in the Technology Data Coordinator folder. The Excel file is named with the generic Fostercare\_@@@&&&&\_####.xlsx, where @@@ represents the month, &&&& represents the year, and #### represents the district code.

1. **Question**: What is my role with regard to the Foster Roster?

**Answer**: Your role with respect to the Foster Roster would depend upon your role(s) in the district. The following are just suggestions/observations and in no way imply role requirements:

1. Foster Liaison – Verify that the student listed is or had been a foster client during enrollment in your district. Coordinate with the PowerSchool Coordinator for ensuring that all verified students are coded as foster in PowerSchool. The SCDE also encourages the Foster Liaison to communicate with Meal/Nutrition staff to ensure that all students that meet the necessary requirements for coding as foster in the meals application are coded appropriately.
2. District Technology Coordinator – If the Foster Liaison does not have access to the District Technology Data Coordinator folder on the ADT, share the data file, using a secure method of transmission. Due to the sensitive nature of this data, the SCDE asks the district staff to exercise due-diligence in protecting and respecting the nature of this data.  These data must not be e-mailed or shared through any unsecure means of transmission, and must be limited to those employees who have a need for the data in the performance of their official duties.
3. District PowerSchool Coordinator – Ensure that all verified foster students are coded appropriately in PowerSchool.
4. Report Card/Accountability Coordinator, Nutrition Director, and Finance Leaders – The SCDE shares the information relating to availability with these entities as an FYI, as foster impacts student services, accountability, and funding (Pupils in Poverty).
5. **Question**: Why are so many people notified about the availability of the Foster Roster?

**Answer**: Foster designation for a students impact so many areas of a student’s record (services, pupils in poverty, funding, reporting, and accountability). The SCDE really has no way of knowing who does what or who would need to know this information in a district, so we try to include as many contacts as possible.

1. **Question**: Should I upload the Foster Roster directly into PowerSchool?

**Answer**: No, the Foster Roster (Excel file) is not intended to be an “uploadable” file for PowerSchool. All students should be verified before being coded in PowerSchool.

1. **Question**: Do I use the Foster Roster file as confirmation that students are/were Foster and code Foster\_Home field in PowerSchool and have nutrition staff code them as foster in the Meals Application?

**Answer**: The Foster Roster is created using a fuzzy match process. See answer to question 2 for further details.

1. PowerSchool: This process will require verification on the part of district staff before coding the student as foster in PowerSchool:
2. The first is to verify that the student(s) is/are/was/were truly foster child/children with your DSS contact.  Because the SCDE/ORDA uses only data elements like name and dob to verify the match to DSS data… we may not always get it right; and
3. If verified, then yes, the PowerSchool clerk should code the student as Foster\_home = yes in PowerSchool.
4. Nutrition/Meals Application: As the requirements for nutrition is different than those for PowerSchool, the Foster Roster can be used to open communication with nutrition, but should not be used exclusively as the source for verification in the nutrition/meals application.
5. **Question**: If a student is not on the Foster Roster, but is coded in PowerSchool, should the code in PowerSchool be removed?

**Answer**: Not necessarily, again the SCDE/ORDA are depending on a fuzzy match process to identify students.  We may not have matched the students(s), the student(s) may have been newly identified, or for some other reason identified in your district as foster.  These too should be verified with your DSS contact.

1. **Question**: When should a student be coded as foster in PowerSchool?

**Answer**: Once you have determined that a student is foster and was/is enrolled in your district while being served through foster care, then code the student in PowerSchool. Students on the Foster Roster are identified as of when they first appear on the Foster Roster from DSS.  Because the SCDE/ORDA is not given the actual date when the students’ services begins, we use the month student first appears. The month is provided in the files disseminated to districts – labeled as Foster\_Month.   If the student is identified as Foster at any point during the year while enrolled or before enrollment in said district, the student should be coded in PowerSchool as Foster\_home = yes.  (Example student identified as Foster in August, would be Foster the entire school year, even if they are reunited with family or adopted and/or move to another district.)

If a student is placed in foster care after leaving your district, you would not code the student as foster in PowerSchool.

1. **Question**: Do I need to let SCDE know if I find discrepancies in the Foster Roster?

**Answer**: The SCDE/ORDA occasionally hears from districts, telling us that a student is missing or mis-identified. In the case of missing students, there are several things that could cause this… here are a few…

1. The names and/or dob’s are not the same as on the DSS file;
2. The student is not in the DSS file; or
3. The (PowerSchool) state\_studentnumber for the student is missing. (If this happens and the student (foster in another district) recently moved into the district, we may not be able to match the student to his/her previous record.)

The district person can share this student information with SCDE, by uploading the identifying information to the Advanced Data Transfer application (ADT) in the District Technology Data Coordinator folder (same folder as where the Foster Roster is loaded) and letting Kim and/or Shirley know that the file is uploaded. See contact information in answer to question #12. We generally do not accept Personal Identifiable Information (PII) on Students from districts (external sources) by email… since it is not secure. Currently, the ADT is the only secure way for districts to share PII.

1. **Question**: Who do I contact at the SCDE if I have questions?

**Answer**: If you have questions regarding the data files, please contact Shirley Scholtz at 803-734-8099 or at sscholtz@ed.sc.gov.  If you have any questions regarding the Foster Care program, please contact Kim Humphrey at 803-734-3759 or at khumphrey@ed.sc.gov.