Wilkinson County School District

EDUCATIONAL **STABILITY** *for* CHILDREN *in* **FOSTER CARE**

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Wilkinson County School District to enroll, withdraw, and serve children placed under the care of the Mississippi Child Protection Service pursuant to the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Title I educational stability provisions.

Goal

Wilkinson County School District in collaboration with Wilkinson County Division of Child Protection Services ensures that children placed in foster care have stability with regards to their education.

Mission

The Wilkinson County School District serves the community by engaging each student in an excellent education that develops skills and citizenship needed for success in a global society.

Definitions (with Roles and Responsibilities)

District Point of Contact (DPC) – the person designated by the Wilkinson County School District Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district. The District Point of Contact will communicate directly with the Regional Director of Child Protective Services. It will be the responsibility of the DPC to ensure that school personnel receive training regarding foster care children and school stability and that district procedures related to these students are being followed. Other responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attend school
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes

District Point of Contact: Sarah Stanwood, Federal Programs Secretary; 601-888-3320; sstanwood@wilkinson.k12.ms.us

School Point of Contact (SPC) – the person designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school. In most schools, this will be the school counselor. The School Point of Contact will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact. The School Point of Contact will ensure that any and all student records are obtained when a foster child enrolls in the local school and that any and all student records are provided to the Child Protective Service Case Worker when a foster child withdraws from the local school. It will be the responsibility of the SPC to ensure that a best interest determination meeting is held when a foster child is withdrawn from school

and to notify the District Point of Contact if there is a problem related to enrollment, withdrawal, or best interest determination of a foster child.

Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS) – the person from Child Protective Services that will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact and with the Child Protective Service Case Worker in charge of the case for a particular foster child.

Case Worker – the person from Child Protective Services who has been assigned the case of a child in foster care.

Foster Child – a child for whom custody has been assigned to Child Protective Services by a sitting judicial authority.

Foster Parent – the parent(s) with whom a foster child is currently residing.

Procedures

Enrollment of a Foster Child

Resident Foster Children

Foster children residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled as any other student that resides within the boundaries of the district. The SPC shall obtain any and all records pertaining to the student's current education. A list of these records is found in Appendix A of this document.

Following the enrollment of the student, the SPC will notify the DPC, forward copies of relevant records and also keep on file. The DPC will keep relevant records until the student withdraws or graduates from the Wilkinson County School District or the child is no longer in the care of Child Protective Services.

Non-Resident Foster Children

Foster children who are no longer residing within the Wilkinson County School District boundaries shall be allowed to remain in the school of origin pending a determination that it is in the best interest of the child to remain. The DPC or SPC will meet with the Case Worker or CPS representative, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, and other interested parties. The meeting shall take place within 3 business days after placement has changed or CPS requests withdrawal. A determination as to whether or not it would be in the best interest of the child to attend the school in the Wilkinson County School District shall be made immediately following this meeting. Wilkinson County School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend the child's school of origin in order to ensure school stability except in cases where it is not in the child's best interest or not reasonable (due to excessive travel times or other factors). In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the CPS will be considered the

final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The CPS considers other non-educational factors (safety, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan). The CPS also has the capacity to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties including the court in making these decisions.

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

The SPC in this case is responsible for providing as many educational records as possible to make any transition from the school of origin to the new school a smooth transition. Records not on file in the school office shall be forwarded the new school within 24 hours following a request by the school or CPS. If the School Point of Contact has a problem with withdrawal or with scheduling the Best Interest Determination meeting he/she will notify the DPC who will contact the Regional Director.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster care parent or Child Protective Services representative should complete a Free/Reduced Meal Application for Wilkinson County Schools. This form may be completed online at schoollunchapp.com (once at the site, then select and open from the dropdown box-- Wilkinson County School District). A paper application is available from the school office, cafeteria cashier or the School Nutrition Office. Verification of foster care status will be done by Food Services through checking the data system. If the system does not indicate foster care status, the school nutrition office staff will contact the school office to verify status directly. Parents who have a foster child are asked to complete a separate meal application for foster children. Parents are asked to include the foster child as a household member on a separate meal application if there are other children enrolled in the Wilkinson County School District and the parents are applying for meal benefits for those children so that all household members are in the total number when the application is processed for approval of meal benefits.

Transportation Procedures

Children in foster care will be entitled to transportation services in the same manner as all other children in the school district. In addition to regular transportation routes, the school district will collaborate with the CPS when transportation is required to maintain children placed in foster care in a school of origin outside their usual attendance area or district when it is in the best interest of the student. Under the direction of the Federal Programs Director, the POC will invite appropriate district officials, the CPS, and officials from other districts or agencies to promptly arrange cost-effective transportation for the student. These agreements will cover how the transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care. *(Transportation Agreement Form appended)*

Confidentiality

Title I foster care provisions allow data sharing to improve educational outcomes for children. WCSD recognizes that sensitive student information may be shared by child welfare agencies

and commits to ensuring children in foster care are properly supported in a way that respects student privacy. In all cases, WCSD will comply with all statutory requirements to protect student privacy, including FERPA and any other privacy requirements under Federal, State, or local laws.

Appendix A

Children in Foster Care Enrollment

Records Checklist

The following records (where applicable) are requested for enrollment of a child in foster care.

Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and Progress Reports
- € Discipline Records
- € Student Achievement
- € Teacher Evaluations
- € Attendance Records
- € Written input from absent participants
- € IEP and/or 504 Plan
- € Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- € Withdrawal From Previous School
- € Copy of Birth Certificate
- € Copy of Immunization Form
- € Other: _____

Records Checklist for Case Worker Withdrawing a Child

Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- € Current Grades
- € Discipline Records
- € List of student activities, if junior high or high school student
- € Attendance Records
- € IEP and/or 504 Plan
- € Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- € Withdrawal Form
- € Copy of Birth Certificate
- € Copy of Immunization Form
- € Copy of Best Interest Determination Worksheet (provided after school meeting)

- € Other:

Records Checklist for Case Worker/Foster Care Parent Enrolling a Child

Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- € Withdrawal Form from Previous School if available
- € Copy of Birth Certificate
- € Copy of Immunization Form
- € Completed Registration Packet
- € Completed Free/Reduced Lunch Application
- € Verification Document for Foster Care Placement
- € Copy of Best Interest Determination Worksheet (from school of origin)

- € Other: _____

Children in Foster Care

Best Interest Determination Worksheet

Goal: To determine if it is in the best interest for the student to remain in the school of origin. MSIS ID: _____ Student Name_____
Current District and School: _____
Potential New District and School: _____

Previous Schools (if known):
_____
_____

Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and Progress Reports
- € Discipline Records
- € Student Achievement
- € Teacher Evaluations
- € Attendance Records
- € Written input from absent participants
- € IEP and/or 504 Plan
- € Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- € Other: _____

Guidance Information:
Number of years attending the current school: _____
Current Academic Performance: _____
Number of Schools Attended in Past 5 years: _____
Number of Schools Attended this year: _____
Impact of School Transfers on Student Performance:
_____
_____

Enrollment in special programs (Gifted, Special Education, Career and Technical Programs, etc.)
_____

Effect of new school on obtaining full academic credit to be able to proceed to the next grade level:
_____
_____

Access to school-based supportive services:
_____
_____

Describe the student's relationship with the current school:
_____
_____

Extracurricular or other activities:
_____
_____

New living arrangement short or long term:
_____
_____

Distance and mode(s) transportation to school of origin: _____

Can change in schools if necessary coincide with end of a grading period: _____

Other factors considered:
_____
_____
_____

Determination of Placement:

€ It is in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin.

- A permanent transportation plan for the student should be in place within five school days of the placement, per the agreed upon transportation procedure.
- While permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation must be provided to ensure there is no disruption in the student's education.

€ It is in the best interest of the student to not remain in the school of origin.

- The student will be immediately enrolled in the new school. The new school will request the student's record the same day from the school of origin. Enrollment means attending and actively participating in class.
- The school of origin will send all of the student's record within one school day (e.g., cumulative record, grades, reading plan, IEP, etc.)

- If the student is currently receiving special education services, he/she will need to continue special education services from the receiving school district.

Date: _____

Meeting Facilitator: _____

Child's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Custodial Agent Representative: _____

Custodial Agent Contact Information:
_____
_____

Meeting Participants:

Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date

Wilkinson County Public School District

Transportation Agreement Form

Child's Name: _____ DOB: _____ Grade: _____

MSIS ID: _____

Custodial Agent Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

_____

_____

Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

_____

_____

Educational Representative, if applicable (Name and Contact Information):

_____

_____

District: _____

District Foster Care Point of Contact (Name and Contact Information):

_____

_____

Case Worker (Name and Contact Information):

_____

_____

The custodial agency verifies that:

1. It is in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin based on the following factors:

_____

_____

2. Eligibility of the child under Title IV-E from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services: _____Yes _____No

a. If YES, reimbursement for some funding of transportation costs:

_____will be pursued

_____cannot be pursued for the reason below:

_____

_____

3. The following was executed to identify a no-cost or low-cost transportation service:

The district verifies that:

_____

_____

4. There is an existing transportation option that can serve the student's new housing placement.

_____ Yes _____No

If YES, explain the option:

_____

_____

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that the most cost effective transportation procedures for this student will be:

_____

_____

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that while permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation arrangements will be:

_____

_____

These transportation procedures were agreed to on the following date: _____and will be implemented within five (5) days, by the following date: _____.

_____ _____

Authorized Signature Date
Mississippi Child Protective Services

_____ _____

Signature Date
LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

Dispute Resolution to State Level Point of Contact

To appeal the district's decision to the Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, please complete this form and submit it by the date indicated on the Written Notice you received from the school. You may submit this form by any of the following methods:

- Scan and email it to twilliams@mdek12.orgwith the subject "Foster Child Dispute Appeal" to Terissa Williams, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact;

OR

- Return the paper form to Terissa Williams, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact at 359 N. West Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Student Name:

_

School in which enrollment is sought: _____

I am the educational decision-maker for this student, and I believe the school in which we are seeking enrollment is in the student's best interest because:

I believe the student has a right to attend this school because:

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you would like to provide additional information, please attach it to this form. The student shall remain in the school of origin, receiving all appropriate educational services including transportation, until the dispute reaches its final resolution.

Educational decision-maker name: _____

Email: _____

Phone

Technical Guidance
Foster Children
August 5, 2025
Carmella C. Scott

Enrollment of Foster Children

- A MS-CPS worker must be present when a foster child arrives at your school to enroll. Foster children are wards of the state, and MS-CPS is the legal guardian. Therefore, MS-CPS is the only entity that can sign for enrollment.
- However, MS-CPS is not the only one that needs to be present. The foster parent or a representative from the facility where the student lives also needs to be present to enroll. MS-CPS will sign as the guardian, but the foster parent or facility representative will need to assist in completing enrolment information.
- When they arrive, MS-CPS should have an Educational Referral form and a Best Interest Determination (BID) form. Ask for those when they arrive, if they don't have them, inform them that you must have them to enroll the student.
- MS- CPS should have already notified the district/ Sarah Stanwood that they were coming. Ask if they have contacted Ms. Stanwood. If they have not, call the federal programs office.

Meetings

- As already stated, MS-CPS is the recognized guardian for foster students, and they must be present for all decisions for the child including:
    - IEP Meetings
    - Change of Placement
    - Behavior/ Suspension/ Expulsion
    - Permission forms
    - Travel forms
- You must contact the foster child's MS-CPS worker to be present for these meetings or notify the MS-CPS worker of any issues. MS-CPS should contact the foster parent or facility.
- When you contact MS-CPS, verify with them that they will contact the foster parent/ facility and have them identify the person they will contact. If they seem vague or unresponsive the school should offer to make the contact with the foster parent/ facility for them.

- The bottom line is that MS-CPS is stretched, and we should assist them with this if we can.

- If the MS-CPS worker comes without a foster parent/ facility rep have them explain why.
- If the MS-CPS worker cannot be present for a meeting they can phone in or video conference in. This should be decided ahead of the meeting. When you contact to request the meeting offer the phone or video conference option, particularly if the worker is out of our area.

Unenrolling/ transitioning residency or schools

- MS-CPS is the only entity that can move a child. Foster parents or a facility cannot sign to remove a child from a school/ program or location. Only MS-CPS can do this.
- Always ask MS-CPS if they have complete the Educational Referral form or BID form and have they contacted Sarah Stanwood. IF they have NOT... have them call me the federal programs office.

This information needs to be shared with your office staff, counselors, SPED teachers, and any others that may contact a parent/ guardian in order to understand the foster child procedures.