

Benton County School District



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

Purpose

Benton County School Board Approved July 27, 2023

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The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Benton County School District to enroll and withdraw children that have been placed under the care of the Mississippi Child Protection Service.

Goal

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

BCSD Vision

To provide an educational environment where each student has the opportunity to reach his or her maximum potential.

BCSD Mission

Equipping, Empowering, and Educating our Students for What Lies Ahead

Definitions

District Point of Contact (DPC) – the person designated by the Benton County School District Superintendent to represent the district with regard to foster children being enrolled in or withdrawn from the district. The District Point of Contact will communicate directly with the Regional Director of Child Protective Services.

School Point of Contact (SPC) – the person designated by the building-level Principal to represent the school with regard to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school. 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 Work when a foster child withdraws from the local school.

Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS) – the person from Child Protective Services who 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 to whom the custody has been appointed to Child Protective Services by a sitting judicial authority.

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

Enrollment of a Foster Child

PER MDE AND CPS GUIDELINES, ONLY A CHILD'S CASE WORKER MAY ENROLL OR WITHDRAW A CHILD. A FOSTER CARE PARENT MAY NOT ENROLL OR WITHDRAW A CHILD FROM ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

The District Point of Contact must be contacted immediately for enrollment and withdrawal of a child in foster care, and a Best Interest Determination meeting must be held with the CPS Case Worker upon enrollment and withdrawal.

Foster Care parents are not legal guardians; therefore, all educational documents and meeting notifications will be sent to the student's case worker. According to MDE, Foster Care parents may not enroll or withdraw children in foster care, may not receive copies of any educational records from the school, and will not be notified of meetings about the student. Case Workers, however, may invite Foster Parents to meetings as they deem appropriate.

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. **See Appendix A Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist (SPC) and Records Checklist for Case Worker/Foster Parent Enrolling a Child (CPS).**

Following the enrollment of the student, the SPC will complete the enrollment document. The SPC will place a copy in the student's cum file in the office of the SPC and forward the original to the DPC. The DPC will keep on file the original until the student withdraws or graduates from the Benton County School District or the child is no longer in the care of Child Protective Services.

Non-Resident Foster Children

Foster children not residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled once a determination has been made that it is in the best interest of the child to attend a school within the Benton County School District. The DPC in collaboration with CPS will meet with the SPC, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, CPS representative, and other interested parties. The meeting shall take place within 3 business days after CPS has sought to enroll the child in the Benton County School District or prior to CPS seeking enrollment in the Benton County School District.

A determination as to whether or not it would be in the best interest of the child to attend the school in the Benton County School District shall be made immediately following this meeting. **See Appendix A Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist (SPC) and Records Checklist for Case Worker/Foster Parent Enrolling a Child (CPS). See Appendix A Best Interest Determination Worksheet and Transportation Agreement for the meeting.**

The Benton County School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend the child's school of origin provided that it is reasonable.

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Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

CPS has the right to withdraw students assigned to them by a judicial authority. 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 to the new school within 24 hours following a request by the school or CPS. **See Appendix A Records Checklist for Case**

Worker Withdrawing a Child.

The SPC shall contact the DPC if he/she thinks it would be in the best interest of the child being withdrawn to remain in the school of origin. The DPC will immediately contact the Regional Director of Child Protective Services to relay the concerns of the SPC as well as possibly schedule a time to discuss the child's educational placement.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster Care Parents or Child Protective Services should complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Form for the Benton County School District. The form along with verification of foster care shall be submitted to the School Point of Contact who in turn will forward the documents to the District Point of Contact. The District Point of Contact will forward the documents to the Food Service Director.

Transportation

Some children in foster care may need transportation to remain in their school of origin. Any child in foster care needing transportation to their school of origin must promptly receive transportation services. If the child remains in their school of origin and moves outside the current school's attendance zone, the Benton County School District (BCSD) must collaborate with the local MDCPS to develop and implement clear written transportation procedures in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 299.13(c)(1)(ii). The two entities must establish a system that expedites transportation for children placed in foster care. The goal is to maintain educational stability for the student. There are various modes of transportation available for students. Examples of no-cost or low-cost options for transportation that the BCSD and the MDCPS could explore include whether:

MDCPS will arrange for the child to be dropped off at a school bus stop for the school of origin;

MDCPS will arrange for the foster parent or other designee to transport the child to school (mileage reimbursable through foster care maintenance payments);

MDCPS and the BCSD will review pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the foster care placement that cross district boundaries, such as bus routes for magnet schools and transportation for homeless students as required by the McKinney-Vento Act;

MDCPS and the BCSD will determine if the child is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs;

MDCPS and the BCSD will address how the child welfare agency will use foster care maintenance payments and administrative funds to pay for transportation to the school;

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MDCPS and the BCSD will specify how “additional costs” of transportation will be calculated, to delineate clearly the WVSD’s responsibility to provide transportation when there are no additional costs;

MDCPS and the BCSD will specifically describe how transportation to the school of origin will be provided in situations where there are no additional costs; and

MDCPS and the BCSD will specify the timing and procedures for the child welfare agency to reimburse the WVSD for transportation costs.

In the event of a dispute between the BCSD and MDCPS concerning the cost of transportation, the two entities must consider what is in the best interest of the student. If the disagreement continues, the cost will be divided equally between the BCSD and MDCPS. The dispute shall be brought before the state-appointed POCs (Terissa Williams, MDE and Cynthia Moore-Hardy, MDCPS). Current transportation expenses shall remain in effect until a decision is rendered to maintain the student’s status quo.

Appendix A

- **Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist**
- **Records Checklist for Case Worker Withdrawing a Child**
- **Records Checklist for Case Workers Enrolling a Child**
- **Children in Foster Care Best Interest Determination Worksheet**
- **Transportation Agreement Form**
- **Dispute Resolution to State-Level Point of Contact**

Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist

The following records are required for enrollment of a child in foster care:

Supporting Documentation:

- Report Cards and Progress Reports
- Discipline Records
- Student Achievement
- Teacher Evaluations if available
- Attendance Records
- Written input from absent participants if available
- IEP and/or 504 Plan if needed
- Cumulative File and Transcript showing current credits if a high school student
- Withdrawal From Previous School
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Immunization Form
- Foster Parent's proof of residency

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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
- Other: _____

Records Checklist for Case Workers 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
- Other: _____

Children in Foster Care Best Interest Determination Worksheet

BID Rationale		
<p>School placement of children in foster care.</p> <p><i>When placing a child of school age in a foster care placement, the local social services agency making such placement shall, in writing, determine jointly with the local school district whether it is in the child's best interests to remain enrolled at the school in which he/she was enrolled prior to the most recent foster care placement or enroll in a new school..</i></p> <p style="color: red; font-size: small;">A copy of the BID form must be submitted to the POC for new school district (if applicable), group home and/or treatment facilities.</p>		
Student Information		
Student Name: _____	Grade: _____	Date of BID: _____
District/School of Origin: _____ (enter school name)		
Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services Information		
Case Worker: _____	County of Responsibility: _____	Phone: (____) ____-____
ASWS: _____		Phone: (____) ____-____
Determination		
<input type="checkbox"/> The student shall remain in the district/school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement (school of origin). Name of School District/School: _____ (enter school name)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Based on the best interest determination, a change in school placement is necessary. The student will be enrolled in the district/school of current residence (receiving school). Name of School District/School: _____ (enter school name)		

NOTE: If a change in educational placement is necessary, enrollment in the new school should take place *immediately*. All educational records should be provided to the receiving school. If a child has an IEP, a placement meeting scheduled and the IEP shared with the new school district's POC prior to the meeting date.

BID Participants				
Title	Participated	Printed Name	Signature	Agree with Determination
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Birth Parent(s) if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
MDCPS POC- Case Worker or Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guardian Ad Litem	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
POC for School District of Origin	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Education Liaison (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
IEP Team Member (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Foster Parent (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No



Supporting Documentation
<p>Indicate and attach any supporting documentation which was used in making this determination of best interest to the receiving school district if applicable. (The following is checklist of sample documents that may be considered. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Report cards <input type="checkbox"/> Progress reports <input type="checkbox"/> Achievement data (test scores) <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance data <input type="checkbox"/> IEP or 504 Plan <input type="checkbox"/> E-mails or correspondence from individuals consulted <input type="checkbox"/> Disciplinary referrals <input type="checkbox"/> Health reports/records

****Should an impasse be reached between the LEA and MDCPS, the BID packet should be forwarded to MDCPS Education Unit by the COR Worker and the LEA POC should forward a copy to MDE Compulsory School Attendance Unit POC.**

Questions for the District of Origin POC to discuss with MDCPS POC during the BID process.

1. How many schools has the student attended, including natural transitions (elementary, middle, high)? How many schools has the student attended this year? What is the student's attendance record for this school year?
2. Describe all participants' views of the student's ties to his or her current school, including significant relationships/interactions, and involvement in extracurricular activities? (Include student/family voice as well as professional input.) Discuss family members, friends, and ties to school staff.
3. What is the student's academic/career goal? Does one school have programs and activities that address the unique needs or interests of the student that the other school does not have?

4. How is the student performing academically and behaviorally? What is the student's progress toward on-time graduation?
5. **Does the student participate in other specialized instruction or services (e.g., special education (IEP) or 504 accommodations, gifted program, career and technical program, therapeutic day treatment)?

If the student has an IEP, is specialized transportation identified as a related service? Yes No

6. If the student is an English learner, have the schools' ESL resources been considered? If so, explain.
7. Would changing schools affect the student's ability to earn full academic credit, participate in sports or other extra-curricular activities, proceed to the next grade, or graduate on time? If so, how?
8. How have the school transfers affected the student emotionally, socially, academically, and physically?
9. What are the safety considerations related to school placement?
10. Would the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture, such as after testing, after an event that is significant to the child, or at the end of the school year?
11. What are the transportation options being considered? How would the length of the commute to school impact the student?

12. Which school is preferred (and why) by:

- the student
- the birthparents (**if applicable**)
- student's current placement provider i.e. group home/foster parent (**if applicable**)

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Transportation Agreement Form

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

MSIS ID: _____

Custodial Agent Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

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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:

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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 Mississippi Child Protective Services

Date

Signature LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

Date

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.org with the subject "Foster Child Dispute

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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 750 N. North Street, Jackson, MS 39202

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: _____

Benton County School District Foster Care Plan and Procedures Approved by the Benton County School Board:

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Patti Blanchard, President

Date

Regina Biggers, Superintendent

Date