

Dale County School System

Foster Care Plan

2023-2024



A collaborative project with Daleville City Schools, Dale County Schools, Ozark City Schools, and The Department of Human Resources

**Alabama Education Stability for Foster Students
LEA Foster Care Plan 2023-2024**

Number of Students in Foster Care SY 2021-2022 (Enrolled the Previous School Year):

Ozark City Schools: 2

Daleville City Schools: 1

Dale County Schools: 2

Number of Students in Foster Care SY 2022-2023 (Previously Enrolled):

Ozark City Schools: 6

Daleville City Schools: 8

Dale County Schools: 13

Number of Students in Foster Care SY 2023-2024 (Currently Enrolled):

Ozark City Schools: 13

Daleville City Schools: 1

Dale County Schools: 13

List Agencies in Collaboration:

Ozark City Schools (OCS)

Daleville City Schools (DCS)

Dale County Schools (DCS)

Dale County Department of Human Resources (DHR)





Policy Review and Revision (Describe how each agency in collaboration reviewed policies and the revisions made to policies as a result of reviews.)

Meetings between the LEAs and DHR are held to jointly make informed decisions about children in foster care and to remove barriers that may hinder the implementation of the Title I foster care provisions. During these meetings policies are reviewed and revised. It is our goal to ensure that the appropriate interventions and strategies are in place to support foster care students to succeed in school. OCS, DCS, and DCS are reviewing and revising their board admission policy. These policies presently ensure all Homeless, Migrant, Immigrant and English language learner students are allowed access to education and educational services. During the revision process students who are placed in foster care have been included in the policy. The enrollment of foster care, homeless, migrant, and English language learner's students shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

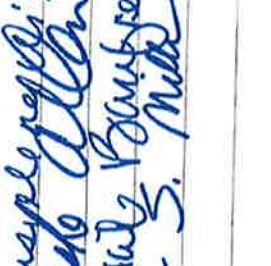



- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of a social security number
- Guardianship or custody requirements

Describe Collaboration and Coordination with Agencies (Include a list of team members, positions, signatures, and agencies.):





The LEA and the Department of Human Resources have worked jointly to make informed decisions regarding children in foster care. All efforts are made to remove barriers that may hinder the implementation of the Title I foster care provisions.

Daleville City Schools		
Team Member	Position	Signature
Ted Folsom	Federal Programs Director/POC	
Christy Kearley	Special Programs Director	
Jessica Pettway	Chief School Financial Officer	
Greg Pittman	Alternative Learning Center Director	

Ozark City Schools

Team Member	Position	Signature
Marsielena Williams	Supervisor of Federal Programs/POC	
Natasha Allen	Special Education Coordinator	
Jacklyn Barefield	Supervisor of Transportation	
Vivian Miller	Chief School Financial Officer	

Dale County Schools

Team Member	Position	Signature
Chuck Walker	Federal Programs Director/POC	
Jesse James	Chief School Financial Officer	
Michael Smith	Transportation Director	
Patrick Reed	Special Education Coordinator	

Dale County Department of Human Resources

Team Member	Director	Position	Signature
Amanda Wallace			<i>Amanda Wallace</i>
Tameaca Vincent	DHR		<i>Tameaca Vincent</i>

LEA (s) Point(s) of Contact:

- Marsielena Williams, Ozark City Schools
- Julie Sconyers, Daleville City Schools
- Chuck Walker, Dale County Schools

DHR(s) Point(s) of Contact:

Amanda Wallace, Dale County DHR

2 C. F. R. § 200.331(d), 200.328(a); 34 C.F.R. § 76.770; ESSA SECTION 1111(1)(e) - LEAs must implement the Title I educational stability requirements of children in foster care, including ensuring that:

- A child in foster care remains in his or her school of origin, unless it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in that child's best interest;
- If it is not in the child's best interest to stay in his or her school of origin the child is immediately enrolled in the new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment; and
- That the new (enrolling) school immediately contacts the school of origin, to obtain relevant academic and other records.

Describe procedures for implementing the above provisions.

Delays in enrollment in school and disruptions to continuous education are not the best interest of the child in foster care. Federal and state laws prohibit delaying a child's ongoing education.

Therefore, the LEA and DHR will collaborate to immediately and appropriately enroll a child in foster care seeking to remain in the school of origin or if the best interest is to transfer to his or her local zoned school. Please note the following definitions:

- “Immediate means no later than one school day after notification of intent to enroll.
- “Enrollment” means the child is attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

To begin the enrollment process, the child's DHR caseworker will notify the LEA Foster Care Point of Contact of the intent to enroll a child who is in foster care. Other adults, as permitted by DHR may be required to assist with enrollment of the child, but the DHR caseworker will always direct the process and be the primary contact for the LEA staff.

The school/district where the child most recently attended is responsible for transferring the education records of the child directly to the school where a child is seeking to enroll.

Only the following documentation may be requested for enrollment of a child in foster care:

- 1) Documentation that the child is in foster care, including:
 - a) The parts of the most recent court order establishing legal custody; OR
 - b) A letter on letterhead of Dale County Department of Resources that has custody of the child explaining that the child is in foster care.
- 2) Identification of the person who is authorized to enroll the student, including
 - a) Documentation to the receiving school that identifies the person as a DHR caseworker, or someone else authorized to enroll the child; AND
 - b) Photo identification

In addition, the LEA may request that DHR present documentation establishing the foster child's current residence. However, lack of such documentation is not a reason to delay or deny enrollment, and DHR may present such documentation after the child is enrolled if it is not available earlier. Appropriate documentation includes: DHR letter verifying the child's address, plus one of the following, as chosen by DHR or any other person authorized to assist with enrolling the child:

- A lease, rent receipts, deed, or property tax bill, or
- A electric bill

ESSA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i) - A description of how the LEA in collaboration with the local child welfare agency will ensure that in determining whether it is in the child's best interest to remain in his or her school or origin, and LEA takes into consideration all factors relating to a child's best interest.

Description of how the LEA will work with child welfare agencies to develop a clear policy or protocol on how to make best interest determinations including making every effort to gather meaningful input from relevant parties, in addition to required child welfare and school representatives, in deciding what school placement is in a child's best interest. Include a description of protocols in this description.

The LEA and DHR presumes the child should remain in his/her school of origin to provide school stability and educational continuity for the child, unless contrary to the child's best interests. In the event of transfer to the local zoned school, the child shall be enrolled immediately and appropriately with all educational records provided to the new school, according to the procedures described below.

- DHR notifies the LEA that the child will be moving to a new residence and the necessary timeframe for determining the child's most appropriate school placement.
- The school provides DHR information on the appropriateness of the current educational setting and DHR will take into account this information and the distance from potential placements to the child's current school in the decision-making process.
- DHR and the LEA POC jointly determine the child's best interest for school placement, in consultation with the child and other key partners.
- The best interest determination for school placement is completed within three business days after DHR notifies the school of the decision of the child's new residence; the child remains in the same school during that time, unless contrary to the child's best interest.
- DHR and the LEAs will jointly arrange for transportation. Payments for the excess cost of transportation expenses for the child to remain in the school of origin will be shared equally between the LEA and DHR.

Meetings between the LEA and DHR are held to jointly make informed decisions about children in foster care and to remove barriers that may hinder the implementation of the Title I foster care provisions. It is our goal to ensure that the appropriate interventions and strategies are in place to support foster care students to succeed in school.

When a student is taken into care, DHR will invite the LEA Point of Contact to Individualized Service Plan (ISP) meetings where best interest determination will be made. School representatives will make every effort to attend or provide input. An absentee form will be provided by DHR in the event of an absence.

The best interest determination consists of several student-centered factors that include the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity of placement. The LEA and DHR should make all reasonable efforts to include in the best interest determination process other individuals who have knowledge of the child. Participation may occur through phone calls, teleconferences, emails or other electronic means, as well as by meeting in person.

In addition to the DHR caseworker, individuals who may have knowledge of the child might include:

- The child him/her self
- Child's birth parent(s) or prior custodian
- Individual the child would like to participate
- Parent Surrogate for educational decisions, if applicable
- School representative
- Classroom teachers
- School counselors
- Special education coordinator if the child has an IEP or 504 plan
- LEA Transportation Department
- Coaches
- Relatives who are caregivers or residential care providers
- Child's attorney; and
- Court Appointed Special Advocate

Factors to assess in determining the child's best interest for school placement include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The student's age
- The student's emotional needs
- The school attended by the student's siblings

- Length of time student is expected to remain at the current placement and the possible location of housing intended to be long-term
- Distance of Commute and the impact it may have on the student's education and other student-centered, transportation-related factors including travel time
- The preferences of the student, the birth parents or prior custodian as appropriate, and the student's foster parent(s) or current placement provider
- School stability and educational continuity
- Time remaining in the academic year
- Personal safety, attendance, academic progress and social involvement of the student in the current school
- The impact transferring the student to a new school may have on his/her needs and progress academically, emotionally, socially and physically
- Availability of classes to avoid credit loss and for the timely graduation or promotion

The caseworker shall document the best interest determination in the child's Case file, including factors considered, participants involved in the collaborative process, the determination for school placement, and the placement made. Documentation of the best interest determination shall be maintained in both the DHR child case file and the school's student cumulative record. If a change in placement is determined to be in the child's best interest, the school representative shall send this documentation to the new school as part of the student's cumulative record.

See Appendix A: Best Interest Determination Placement Form

See Appendix B: Best Interest Determination Dispute Resolution

ESSA Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Description of transportation protocols and procedures to include how additional costs for transportation will be calculated and funded as well as a policy for LEAs to resolve best interest disputes and interagency disputes related to transportation costs. Description must include how transportation and transportation costs will be monitored. (Include LEA and welfare responsibilities for providing transportation.)

Description of Dispute Resolution Policy

For each student in foster care remaining in his or her school of origin the LEA and DHR will work collaboratively to provide, arrange, and fund transportation for the duration of the child's time in foster care.

Wherever possible, and where it is in the student's best interest, the LEA buses and/or other modes of transportation should be utilized for transportation according to the following procedure:

- The LEA will advise DHR within 5 school days whether it is able to transport the student in question by school bus or alternative approved transportation, and if so, the LEA will arrange transportation within 5 school days.
- During the interim period of up to 5 school days during which the LEA is arranging transportation, DHR will make all reasonable efforts to provide alternative transportation to ensure that the child does not miss school.
- In the event of additional cost, the LEA and DHR will share the cost equally. The LEA will bill DHR for the cost of transportation services provided by the LEA buses, and billing will be verified through student attendance records only.
- The LEA Transportation Director and the Chief School Financial Officer will develop a rate to be charged for the cost of bus transportation according to state regulations. Rates, cost and billing will need to be discussed on an individual basis of need and circumstance as it pertains to the best interests of the foster child.
- DHR will provide a contact for billing purposes, including a name, address, telephone number, and email address to ensure bills are directed to the proper individual and are paid promptly.
- Payments of bills will be due within 30 days of receipt.

If the LEA advises DHR that it cannot transport a student by school bus, DHR and the LEA will collaborate to arrange for safe and timely transportation, using one or more of the following options;

- Foster parents reimbursed at the State mileage rate using Title IV E Foster Care Maintenance Payment
- Friends, relatives and neighbors of the child or foster parent reimbursed at the state mileage rate;
- Employees of DHR and residential programs;
- Public transportation paid at the established rate
- Contracted transportation

See Appendix C: Transportation Dispute Resolution

ESSA Section 111(g)(1)(E)(ii)-(iii) Describe protocol for a child in foster care to be immediately enrolled in a new school.

Delays in enrollment in school and disruptions to Continuous education are not in the best interest of the child in foster care. Federal and state laws prohibit delaying a child's ongoing education. Therefore, the LEA and DHR will collaborate to immediately and appropriately enroll a child in foster care seeking to attend his or her local zoned school, whether he or she is enrolling in school for the first time or is transferring following a change in foster care placement and a determination that transfer would serve his or her best interest. Please note the following definitions:

- "Immediate" means no later than one school day after notification of intent to enroll.
- "Enrollment" means the child is attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

To begin the enrollment process, the child's DHR caseworker will notify the LEA POC of the intent to enroll a child who is in foster care. Other adults, as permitted by DHR may be required or permitted to assist with enrollment of the child, but the DHR caseworker will always direct the process and be the primary contact for the LEA staff.

DHR need not produce the child's school record at the time of enrollment in order to enroll the child in school. The school/district the child most recently attended is responsible for transferring the education records of the child directly to the school where a child is seeking enrollment.

Decisions regarding school selection should be made on a case by case basis, giving attention to the circumstances of each student. The following information and checklist may help Child Welfare Services staff and the Educational Rights Holder in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Background and Law:

Studies consistently show that school stability is critical for academic achievement. Therefore, the law allows a youth to remain in their school of origin, if the youth, the person holding educational rights and the school district foster care liaison determine that remaining in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child.

When a child is going to change residences, whether this is due to initial entry into the foster care system or a placement change afterwards, the first key decision is whether or not the child will remain in the same school. The Federal Fostering Connections legislation states that the child's case plan must contain the following assurances:

- The placement takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement.
- The placement agency has coordinated with the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the child and appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement or, if remaining in that school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances by the placement agency and the local educational agency to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school and to provide all of the child's educational records to the new school. WIC §16501.1(f).

48853.5 (e)(6) The educational liaison, in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the foster child and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster child, may recommend, in accordance with the foster child's best interests, that the foster child's right to attend the school of origin be waived and the foster child be enrolled in a public school that pupils living in the attendance area in which the foster child resides are eligible to attend.

Key Considerations:

- How long is the placement expected to last and what is the permanent plan?
- How many schools has the child attended this year? The past few years?
- How strong is the child academically?
- Which school does the child prefer? Why?
- Would the timing of a transfer coincide with a logical juncture such as after testing, end of semester, or end of the school year?
- How would the length of commute impact the child?
- Does the youth have any anxieties about the upcoming move or changes in his/her life?

- Are there any safety issues to consider?
- Is the current school in Program Improvement (PI)?
- If so, how are students that are demographically similar to the student performing academically?

Appendix A: Best Interest in School of Origin Decisions: A Checklist for Decision Making

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Remaining in the Same School (School of Origin) Considerations		Transferring to a New School Considerations	
Y	Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served at the same school due to prior history.</i>	Y	Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served at a different school due to his or her history/future.</i>
Y	Age and grade placement of the student <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has been in this environment for an extended period of time.</i>	Y	Age and grade placement of the student <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is not critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has attended the school of origin for only a brief time. The student has destructive or dangerous relationships at their school of origin.</i>
Y	Academic Strength <i>The child's academic performance is weak, and the child would fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.</i>	Y	Academic Strength <i>The child's academic performance is strong and at grade level and the child would likely recover academically from a school transfer.</i>
Y	Social and emotional state <i>The child is suffering from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, does not want to leave, or involved in school related or extra-curricular activities.</i>	Y	Social and emotional state <i>The child seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, does not mind transferring to another school, or is not involved in school related or extra-curricular activities.</i>
Y	Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs <i>The advantage of remaining in the school of origin outweighs any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.</i>	Y	Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs <i>Shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The new school can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.</i>
Y	Personal safety of the student <i>The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>	Y	Personal safety of the student <i>The new school has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>
Y	Student's need for special instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the school of origin.</i>	Y	Student's need for special instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the new school.</i>
Y	Length of anticipated stay in a temporary or permanent location <i>The student's current living situation is outside the school of origin attendance area, but his/her living situation or location continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by remaining in the school of origin.</i>	Y	Length of anticipated stay in a temporary or permanent location <i>The student's current living situation appears to be stable and unlikely to change suddenly. The student will benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in his or her community.</i>
Y	Academic Performance Ranking <i>The school is in program improvement, but the student is connected (academically or socially) to the school which outweighs transferring to a new school or higher performing school.</i>	Y	Academic Performance Ranking <i>The school of origin is in Program Improvement and the new potential school will meet the educational needs of the student. The new school can provide more academic support services and greater opportunities than the school of origin.</i>

School Foster Care

STUDENT ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM

School Name: _____ School Address _____

School Telephone Number

School Fax Number

Students Name: _____ SSN/SN: _____ Grade: _____

Current Address:

E-911 Address (Street Address)

City

State

Zip Code

Current Telephone Number

Complainant Information

Name _____ Relationship to Student _____

Current Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Telephone Number

Note: Student information regarding address, telephone number, information protected by Everyday School Records Act can be released only to parent, guardian, the student, or a person specifically designated as a representative of the parent or guardian.

Name of school that complainant chooses student to be immediately enrolled in and/or transported to/from until dispute is resolved:

Is this the school of origin? _____ If no, from which school was the student transferred? _____

Reason for Complaint

Complainant Signature

Date

You may contact the state coordinator if further help is needed:

State Coordinator for Homeless Education

Sally Meek, State Coordinator Foster Care

Alabama Department of Education

Office: (334) 242-8199

FAX: (334) 242-0496

School Use Only

Principal's Action on the Complaint

Taken within _____ school day(s) after receiving notice of the complaint.

Date central office contact person was notified of the dispute: _____

DISTRICT DISPUTE RESOLUTION FORM - Foster Care

Student's Name: _____

SSN/SN _____

School Name: _____

Grade: _____

District Action on Complaint

Taken within _____ school days after receiving notice of the complaint. Was the complaint resolved at the district level? _____ yes _____ no

If the dispute was resolved at the district level, describe the action taken by the Ozark City Schools Foster Care Liaison to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the complainant:

If the dispute was not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, did the Foster Care Point of Contact convene a meeting of the interested parties to attempt resolution of the dispute? _____ yes _____ no. If yes, when and where did the meeting take place? Describe the outcome of the meeting.

If no, will a meeting be held for resolution purposes? When? Where?

If a resolution cannot be derived at the district level, the Foster Care Point of Contact should assist the complainant in contacting service organizations to provide technical assistance to the complainant. Did the Foster Care Point of Contact assist the complainant in this manner? _____ yes _____ no

Name of service organization contacted for assistance

Was the dispute resolved? _____ Date _____

Describe the resolution:

Complainant Signature

Foster Care Point of Contact

You may contact the state coordinator if further help is needed:

**State Coordinator for Homeless Education
Sally Meek, State Coordinator for Foster Care
Alabama Department of Education
Office: (334) 242-8199
FAX: (334) 242-0496**

School Foster Care

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION DISPUTE FORM

School Name: _____ School Address _____

School Telephone Number

School Fax Number

Students Name: _____ SSN/SN: _____ Grade: _____

Current Address:

E-911 Address (Street Address)

City

State

Zip Code

Current Telephone Number

Complainant Information

Name _____ Relationship to Student _____

Current Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Telephone Number _____

Note: Student information regarding address, telephone number, information protected by Everyday School Records Act can be released only to parent, guardian, the student, or a person specifically designated as a representative of the parent or guardian.

Name of school that complainant chooses student to be immediately enrolled in and/or transported to/from until dispute is resolved:

Is this the school of origin? _____ If no, from which school was the student transferred? _____

Reason for Complaint _____

Complainant Signature

Date

You may contact the state coordinator if further help is needed:

State Coordinator for Homeless Education

Sally Meek, State Coordinator Foster Care

Alabama Department of Education

Office: (334) 242-8199

FAX: (334) 242-0496

School Use Only

Principal's Action on the Complaint

Taken within _____ school day(s) after receiving notice of the complaint.

Date central office contact person was notified of the dispute: _____