

Alexander City (102) Public District - FY 2025 - Consolidated - Rev 0 - Improvement Planning

Alabama Education Stability for Foster Students

LEA Student in Foster Care Overview

13 Number of Students in Foster Care (Enrolled for Previous School Year)

26 Number of Students in Foster Care (Currently Enrolled)

List Agencies in Collaboration:

Tallapoosa County Schools

Alexander City Schools

Tallassee City Schools

Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources

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

The Alexander City Schools, Tallapoosa County Schools, and the Tallasse City Schools will work with the Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources (DHR) to develop plans to address the needs of children being served under foster care in accordance with the provisions provided under the Every Student Succeeds Act Of 2015 (ESSA). The Federal Programs Directors and foster care liaisons from each LEA will meet annually with the DHR point of contact to review and/or revise the current plan. This annual meeting will address the individual needs of each child on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, all parties will provide input to improve services for children in foster care including issues concerning school of origin, withdrawal, enrollment procedures, transportation consideration, and associated costs.

- Each LEA reviewed its enrollment policies and revised the No Barriers to Enrollment Policy to include students in foster care. In addition each district ensures and submits as policy that students in foster care will enroll or remain enrolled in the student's school of origin, unless it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in the best interest of the student. If it is not in a student's best interest to stay in the school of origin, a student in foster care may be enrolled in any school in the system that serves the attendance area in which the student is living, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

- Each district's LEA Consolidated Plan includes an assurance that each district will collaborate with DHR regarding students in foster care and ensuring educational stability.

- Each district has been notified of the DHR Point of Contact.

- Each Consolidated Plan will describe (again) implementation procedures for transportation to maintain foster care students in their school of origin when in their best interest, how transportation will be provided and funded. The dispute resolution process will be jointly developed.

- The Foster Care Plan will be reviewed and revised as needed annually.

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

The team met on September 20, 2024 via zoom to develop the Fostering Connections plan for the Alexander City Schools, the Tallapoosa County Schools, the Tallassee City Schools and the Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources. The team members are:

1. Mrs. Lisa Hornsby , Director of Federal Programs, Tallapoosa County Schools
2. Mrs. Alice Owens, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Federal Programs, Alexander City Schools
4. Ms. Wendy Cowan, Director of Federal Programs, Tallassee City Schools
5. Mrs. Brenda Floyd, Director of Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources (POC)
6. Mr. Lewis Prince, Foster Care Supervisor
7. Danielle Coleman, Director Pre-K

LEA(s) Point(s) of Contact:

Mrs. Alice Owens, Mrs. Wendy Cowan, and Mrs. Lisa Hornsby

DHR(s) Point(s) of Contact:

Mrs. Brenda Floyd and Mr. Lewis Prince

LEA Student in Foster Care Responses

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.

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. Each LEA will have Board approved policies to include the subgroup of children in foster care. The policy ensures that children in foster care will remain in their school of origin if it is collaboratively determined to be in their best interest. Placement and best interest for the child will be a joint decision between DHR and the LEA. When determining placement and best interest of the child the appropriateness and proximity of the current school setting will be considered.

If it is not in the child's best interest to stay in his or her school of origin the child will be immediately enrolled in the new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. Each LEA has a Board approved policy ensuring that children in foster care are not barred from enrollment regardless of lack of required documentation.

The new (enrolling) school will immediately contact the school of origin, to obtain relevant academic and other records. They will speak with personnel that who has knowledge of the child, to discuss the child's social and emotional states along with the academics. This information will be used to determine the school of best interest for the student.

Enrollment without their required immunization record will be pending in receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation.

Existing methods of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

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 of 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 best interest determination will be made based upon the Educational Protocol developed between the Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources, the Alexander City Schools, the Tallapoosa County Schools, and the Tallassee City Schools.

When a child enters foster care, the assigned caseworker will notify and provide the following to the school counselor for the child(ren) in question:

1. A letter stating that Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources has custody and verification of placement and residency
2. Enrollment should be completed jointly by the caseworker and foster parent whenever possible.
3. Name and contact information for the assigned caseworker and supervisor.

When a child transfers to a new school or school system, the caseworker assigned to the case will notify and provide the following to the school counselor for the child(ren) in question:

1. A letter stating Tallapoosa County Department of Human Resources has custody and verification of placement and residency

2. Enrollment should be completed jointly by the caseworker and foster parent whenever possible.

Should a Best Interest Determination meeting need to be held, it will include the foster care liaison from the receiving school and the school the student last attended, personnel from the school last attended that has knowledge of the child, the foster care guardian and a representative from the participating DHR. Personnel from the last school will provide knowledge on the students academic and social emotional status while attending the school. This will include, but not be limited to academic performance, discipline data, participation in extra-curricular activities and social activities. This information will be used in determining which school will be able to serve the best interest of the student.

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

Each LEA and DHR point of contact have decided jointly how the additional costs for transportation will be calculated and funded. Additional costs are the difference between what a district would otherwise spend to transport a student to the assigned school and the cost of transporting a child in foster care to his/her school of origin. The district will use Title I Part A funds to fund transportation for a child in foster care to his/her school of origin if it is determined that school is in the best interest of the child; however the Homeless Set Aside must not be used for this purpose.

The LEA and DHR will make every effort to arrive at an agreement concerning costs associated with transporting foster children. In the event that a dispute is unresolved locally, the State Department of Education (SDE) , or his/her designee and the Director of DHR Family Services or his/her designee must address the issue within ten days of the receipt of a written request. One additional SDE staff member will help settle disputes at the state level. The student should be enrolled and transported to the school determined by the child welfare agency while the dispute is being resolved. If the dispute remains unresolved after the SDE responds to the written request, both agencies, SDE and DHR may assign staff to conduct an on-site visit to gather and clarify information. A follow-up response or determination may be made within thirty (30) days at which time the collaborative determination will be final.

ESSA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(ii)-(iii) Describe protocol for a child in foster care to be immediately enrolled in a new school.

Each LEA will immediately enroll foster care students even in the absence of the normally required documents as outlined in the LEAs board approved enrollment policy. The receiving school will contact the previous school to obtain student records