

Ada City Schools

Foster Care Plan

12/1/2016

This plan is to address the requirement for foster care provisions under Title I of ESSA which require State Educational Agencies (SDE) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) to ensure educational stability and minimize educational disruptions for children in foster care.

Foster Care Plan

The Ada City School District is committed to provide all students with sound educational experiences. We recognize that foster children are at an increased risk of grade retention, gaps in academic achievement, low high school graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment. These provisions promote greater stability for children in foster care so that they can continue their education without disruption, maintain important relationships with peers and adults, and have the opportunity to achieve college and career readiness.

The educational stability includes assurances that (1) a child in foster care will remain in the child's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest in that school and (2) if a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will be immediately enrolled in the school of residence, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

School District Assurances

- Each placement of the child in foster care will take 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 state child welfare agency will coordinate with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement
- If it is not in the best interest of the child to return to the resident school, the child will immediately be provided the appropriate enrollment to the Ada City School District
- The Ada City School District will gather and maintain educational records and promptly send them to any district where the student moves

Foster Care Child Liaison (POC)

The Ada City School District will assign at least one person to serve as a Foster Care Child Liaison, or Point of Contact (POC). The District shall submit this person's name to the OSDE, through the online Grants Management System, by September 30 of each year. If additional staff members are needed to meet the requirements, the district will make assignments as deemed necessary. The Foster Care Child Liaison will work in the best interest of the child to ensure that all educational requirements are being satisfied. The liaison will meet with the site administrator, school counselor, classroom teacher, and foster parent as necessary. The liaison will have access to available training and other resources necessary to stay informed of any changes in the Foster Care Regulations. The Foster Care Child Liaison will work closely with state and tribal child welfare agencies and perform duties and responsibilities which may include:

- Coordinating with the corresponding child welfare agency
- Leading the development of a process for making the best interest determination
- Documenting the best interest determination
- Facilitating the transfer of records and immediate enrollment
- Facilitating data sharing with the child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA and other privacy protocols
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes
- Ensuring that children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attending school
- Providing professional development and training to school staff on the Title I provisions and educational needs of children in foster care

Committee

A committee will meet to determine the appropriate placement of each foster care child. The committee will be comprised of the site administrator or district representative, the Foster Care Liaison, and a member of the CWA. In emergency circumstances, the CWA has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then to consult with the District to make the best interest determination of the child. The factors that may be evaluated in making the best interest determination include:

- Proximity of the resource family home to the child's present school
- Safety considerations
- Age and grade level of the child as it relates to the other best interests factors
- Needs of the child, including social adjustment and well-being
- Child's performance, continuity of education and engagement in the school the child presently attends
- Child's special educational programming if the child is classified
- Point of time in the year
- Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification
- Anticipated duration of the placement
- Preferences of the child
- Preferences of the child's parent(s) or educational decision maker(s)
- The child's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers
- Placement of the child's sibling(s)
- Influence of the school climate on the child, including safety
- Availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs
- History of school transfers and how they have impacted the child

- How the length of the commute would impact the child, based on the child's developmental stage
- Whether the child is a student with a disability under the IDEA and is receiving special education and related services, or a student with a disability under Section 504 who is receiving special education or related aids and services, and if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin
- Whether the child is an EL and is receiving language services, and if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin

*Transportation costs will not be considered when determining a child's best interests.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the child welfare agency should be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The child welfare agency is uniquely positioned to assess vital non-educational factors such as safety, sibling placements, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan. They child welfare agency also has the authority, capacity, and responsibility to collaborate with, and gain information from, multiple parties, including parents, children, schools and the court in making these decisions.

Enrollment of Students

Foster care parents, social workers or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in the Ada City Schools District. The District understands that all necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) may not be immediately available at the time of enrollment. Regardless, it is the intention of the Ada City School District to provide a smooth transition for the student into our district. A district representative will contact the home school district for the records and will make adaptations as needed. After enrollment, the following guardianship or legal custody documents shall be provided to the District by the foster family or CWA:

- Power of attorney
- Affidavit
- Court Order

IDEA Students

Under IDEA, Part B, school districts must make a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) available to all eligible children with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). FAPE under IDEA includes the provision of special education and related services at no cost to the parents in accordance with a properly developed Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each child's placement decision must be made by a group of knowledgeable persons.

The Ada City School District will operate in accordance with all state and federal laws regarding special education students. Special education services will be provided to foster care students as they are to all students following the guidelines listed below:

- Educational placement will be determined annually and will be based on the child's IEP in accordance with the child's individual needs
- The child will be placed in the least restrictive environment, and unless he/she requires some other arrangement, the child will attend the school that he/she would attend if not disabled
- Timely and expedited evaluations and eligibility determinations for highly mobile children with disabilities will be made when possible
- Children in foster care will have access to related aids and services that are designed to meet their educational needs
- Children will have access to comparable services including summer and extended school year services if applicable
- Children in foster care will not be discriminated against and are considered a protected group

EL Students

The Ada City School District will ensure that English Learners (ELs) students in foster care will participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. The District will demonstrate compliance of their obligations by:

- Identifying and assessing all potential EL students in a timely, valid and reliable manner
- Providing EL students with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful
- Sufficiently staffing and supporting the language assistance programs for EL students
- Ensuring that EL students have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all curricular and extra-curricular activities
- Avoiding unnecessary segregation of EL students
- Ensuring that EL students with disabilities are evaluated in a timely and appropriate manner for special education and disability-related services and that their language needs are considered in these evaluations and delivery of services
- Meeting the needs of EL students who opt out of language assistance programs
- Monitoring and evaluate EL students in language assistance programs following federal guidelines
- Continuing to evaluating the effectiveness of the District's language assistance program and progress of each student
- Ensuring meaningful communication with the parents of the students

Transportation

The Ada City School District will collaborate with the CWA to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation is provided to children in foster care. This collaboration and resulting agreement between the District and the CWA will result in procedures for how transportation will be provided, arranged and funded for the duration of the child's foster care. Special attention will be made to ensure that the child can remain in his/her school of origin. Each agreement can/will vary greatly because the needs of each child should be considered in making the decision on transportation.

The regular transportation policies approved by the Ada City School District will be followed in transporting foster care students. Drivers will be appropriately licensed, certified, and clear all required DMV and background checks. Various public school vehicles may be used to transport students depending on the circumstances. Students that must be transported out of state will be school board approved as required by Oklahoma law.

Student Records

The Ada City School District will share education records with the CWA that are allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This permits educational agencies to disclose without parental consent, educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to State and Tribal agencies.