



North Tippah
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Educational Stability
For Children in
Foster Care
2024 / 2025

Dr. Dax Glover, Superintendent of Education

North Tippah School District
20821 Hwy 15, Falkner, MS 38629
662-837-8450

www.northtippah.org

Revised 2024

Purpose

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

Goal

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

Definitions

District Point of Contact (DPOC) – the person designated by the North Tippah School District Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district.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.

School Point of Contact (SPOC) – the person designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school.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 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 that 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

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 SPOC 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. According to SBE Policy 30.8, III. 2, (a)(ii) (page 5) ...a foster parent with verification provided may enroll the foster care student in their care. Verification may come in the form of the court order or a letter/form on letterhead from MDCPS stating the person is the foster parent for the enrolling student. MDCPS Case Managers and Educational Liaisons may also enroll a foster care student. Following the enrollment of the student the SPOC will complete the enrollment document placing a copy on file in the office of the SPOC while forwarding the original to the DPOC. The DPOC will keep on file the original until the student withdraws or graduations from the Alcorn 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 North Tippah School District. The DPOC from the originating district will collaborate with CPS, SPOC, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, or other interested parties. A determination as to whether or not it would be in the best interest of the child to attend the school in the North Tippah School District shall be made immediately following this collaboration. Schools will need a copy of this BID Form when the student arrives to be enrolled.

Exception: Students enrolling into Kindergarten for the first time do not require a BID form to be completed if the foster parents can prove residency in the school zone they are seeking to attend. In this situation, a letter is required from CPS indicating the child is in their care.

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

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

CPS has the right to withdraw students assigned to them by a judicial authority. CPS workers will work with the DPOC to complete a BID Form to determine the best interest of the student. The SPOC 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.

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

Student Records

In January 2013, Congress passed the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), which amended the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to permit educational agencies and institutions to disclose, without parental consent or the consent of an eligible student, education records of students in foster care to State and Tribal child welfare agencies.

Foster Parents are not automatically given education decision making rights. According to SBE Rule 30.8 II, B 1(g)(iv) (page 2-3 of the attachment), education decision maker must be provided through the MDCPS point of contact. Documentation is to be maintained on who has the educational rights for the foster care student. So, this should be listed in the foster care students file. Please note, if biological parents' rights are not terminated they may be the education decision maker and would have access to the education records.

If the MDCPS provides written documentation verifying the person as a foster care parent, then an LEA is allowed to share the student information. The information must be for educational purposes only.

Notifications of grades & attendance along with requests for any conferences should be provided to both the foster parent and the child welfare worker assigned to the foster care student.

MDCPS workers should provide copies of all educational records for school-age children in foster care when registering the child.

Records should include but not limited to the following:

- copy of birth certificate,
- copy of immunization form,
- withdrawal from previous school,
- grades from previous school,
- class schedule for junior high and high school students,
- copy of the most recent IEP if the student receives services from IDEA,
- copy of language service plan if the student received English Learner services, and
- any other record that will assist the school in the enrollment of the student.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster Care Parents or Child Protective Services should complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Form for the North Tippah 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.

School of Origin

These provisions emphasize the importance of limiting educational disruption by keeping the children who move in foster care (due to entering the foster care system or changing placements) in their schools of origin, unless it is determined in their best interest to change schools.

Best Interest Determination (BID)

- The LEA and MDCPS must determine the best interest of a child in foster care collaboratively.
- The cost of transportation cannot be considered when determining the best interest of the child.
-

Considerations:

- The child's participation in specialized instruction (e.g. gifted programming, career and technical education program, College Credit Plus, Advanced Placement classes, dual-credit classes).
- The availability of required special education and/or related service in a school other than the school of origin when the student has an identified disability under IDEA and 504.
- The availability of language services in a school other than the school of origin when the student has been identified as an English Learner pursuant to Title VI and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act.
- The student's ability to earn full academic credit, the ability to proceed to the next grade, or the ability to graduate on time.
- School climate, peer support, supportive adults and involvement in extracurricular activities.
- The availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs.
- The impact the commute to and from school would have on the student, based on developmental functioning. The cost of transportation or the appropriate services should not be a consideration when determining a child's best interest.
- For children with disabilities, the Fostering Connections Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federal requirements are to be factored in when determining the best interest.
- The safety of the child.
- The wishes of the parent, caregiver, and child.
- The toll of the commute, distance and time for the child to travel to and from the school he/she is attending at the time of placement.
- The projected duration of out-of-home placement.
- The child's academic, developmental and socialization needs.
- The effect a school change will have on the child's learning.
- The potential loss of credits, for high school students, which may occur due to changing schools in the middle of a term or semester.

Responsibilities of NTSD

The NTSD will notify MDCPS if children are coming to school improperly dressed or without materials needed to support success.

MDCPS is the guardian and that foster parents or group home staff should not be making educational decisions for the child/children.

NTSD should be made aware of the trauma children in foster care experience and associated behaviors. NTSD and MDPS should collaborate with regards to treatment goals that can be incorporated in the child's BIP or IEP, if possible.

NTSD and/or MDCPS workers may invite therapists and/or group home staff to participate in educational related meeting.

Transportation

NTSD will collaborate with MDCPS concerning transportation for a foster care child that lives outside of the district but remains a student in the district. The following will be explored in providing transportation such as:

- 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 LEA will review pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the foster care placement that cross district boundaries;
- MDCPS and LEA will determine if the child is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs.
- MDCPS and LEA will address how the child welfare agency will use foster care maintenance payments and administrative funds to pay for transportation to the school;
- MDCPS and LEA will specify how "additional costs" of transportation will be calculated, to delineate clearly the LEA's responsibility to provide transportation when there are no additional costs;
- MDCPS and LEA will specifically describe how transportation to the school of origin will be provided in situations where there are not additional costs; and
- MDCPS and LEA will specify the timing and procedures for the child welfare agency to reimburse the LEA for transportation costs.

In the event of a dispute between the LEA 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 LEA and MDCPS.

Appendix A

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
- 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
- Other: _____

Records Checklist for Case Worker 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: _____

BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT

Promote educational stability by ensuring that students in foster care can perform at the same high levels as their peers with limited disruption by first determining what is in the youth's best interest.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) stipulates that foster care students should only change schools if remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest.

How to Make A Best Interest Determination

- If a change in school is being considered, the local education agency (LEA) and child welfare agency (CWA) must collaborate to complete the Best Interest Determination (BID) process.
- The MDCPS case worker or designee and the school of origin POC should engage in a conversation with the youth and any other appropriate parties to discuss the following information as it relates to the youth's educational stability:
 - Number of schools the youth has attended
 - How often the youth is changing schools
 - Home placement type/length as well as number of placements
 - Youth's involvement in extracurricular / community activities
 - The youth's academic/career goals
 - The youth's academic achievement
 - The youth's ability to earn full academic credits, participate in sports, graduate on time, etc.
 - The student's ability to receive necessary supports/services
 - What the youth wants, what the family wants, what the resource family wants, what CPS wants
 - School safety concerns
 - Youth's access to gifted or accelerated programs
 - If changing schools could affect the youth's end of year testing
 - Travel time to and from school
 - Biological family, resource family, friends, mentor, residential staff, MDCPS connections
 - Youth's relationships and connections to teachers and school staff
- The conversation will result in a determination that should be recorded on the BID Form. All parties who participate should be listed on the BID Form with the corresponding signature.
- Youth shall remain enrolled in their school of origin until the BID process is complete and a determination has been made.
- If the determination is made for the youth to change schools, the youth should be enrolled immediately in the new school even if the required paperwork is not available.
- The enrolling school's Foster Care Point of Contact (POC) will contact the school of origin to obtain necessary documentation.
- There must be a school of origin in order for the BID process to occur. With no school of origin, the normal school enrollment process will occur.

North Tippah 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 server 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 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: _____