Opp City Schools

Foster Care

2026-2027

Superintendent: Matt Blake

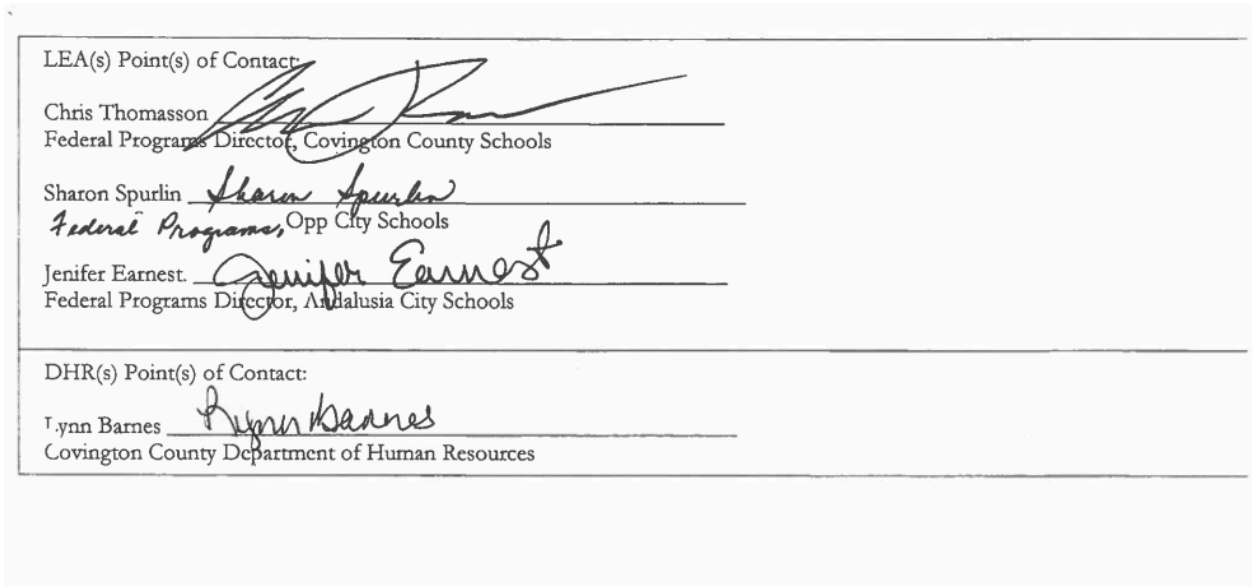
Federal Programs Director: Sharon W. Spurlin

Foster Care Plan
Opp City (180) Public District - FY 2026 - Consolidated - Rev 0 - Improvement Planning

Alabama Education Stability for Foster Students
LEA Student in Foster Care Overview
3 Number of Students in Foster Care (Previous School Year)
6 Number of Students in Foster Care (Current School Year)
List Agencies in Collaboration:
Sharon Spurlin, Federal Programs Director Opp City Schools (334) 493-3173
Jenifer Earnest, Federal Programs Director Andalusia City Schools (334) 222-3186
Chris Thomasson, Federal Programs Director, Covington County Schools (334) 222-7571
Lynn Barnes, Supervisor Covington County Department of Human Resources (334) 427-7921

Policy Review and Revision (Describe how each agency in collaboration reviewed policies and the revisions made to policies as a result of reviews.)
A meeting was held on August 29, 2025 at the Covington County Board of Education, This meeting included the following attendees: Sharon Spurlin, Opp City Schools; Jennifer Earnest, Andalusia City Schools; Chris Thomasson, Covington County Schools; Lynn Barnes, Covington County Department of Human Resources. Each of the aforementioned individuals are their agencies' point of contact. Conversations centered around how children's cases are handled when they are placed in foster care. Covington County's Department of Human Resources does an incredible job keeping children in their school of origin. It was concluded that DHR is already using the "Best Interest Determination Factors" when placing students. Mrs. Barnes and her case workers have a good working relationship with the school counselors throughout the county which includes both the city and county schools.

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


LEA(s) Point(s) of Contact:
Chris Thomasson
Federal Programs Director, Covington County Schools
Sharon Spurlin
Federal Programs, Opp City Schools
Jenifer Earnest.
Federal Programs Director, Andalusia City Schools
DHR(s) Point(s) of Contact:
Lynn Barnes
Covington County Department of Human Resources

When a child is placed into foster care, Lynn Barnes (Covington County Department of Human Resources) or one of her case workers will contact Sharon Spurlin(Opp City Schools Point of Contact), Jennifer Earnest (Andalusia City Schools Point of Contact) and Chris Thomasson (Covington County Schools Point of Contact) to discuss the best school placement for the child. The child and the person with the decision-making rights will also be included in this discussion.

LEA Point of Contact (name and email address): Sharon Spurlin sspurlin6@oppboe.com
DHR Point of Contact (name and email address): Lynn Barnes covington@dhr.alabama.gov

EA 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.
When a child is placed into foster care, Lynn Barnes (Covington County Department of Human Resources) or one of her case workers will contact Sharon Spurlin (Opp City Schools Point of Contact), Jennifer Earnest (Andalusia City Schools Point of Contact) and Chris Thomasson (Covington County Schools Point of Contact) to discuss the best school placement for the child. The child and the person with the decision-making rights will also be included in this discussion. If a child attends a school that is not in the same city as their foster home, and transportation is needed, Covington County DHR will provide that. The District will utilize the Transportation Set Aside in the event it is the district's responsibility to provide transportation for a student(s). If the child needs to be enrolled in one of our schools, he or she will be enrolled. The case worker and the school counselor will work together to obtain any necessary paperwork; however, this paperwork will not be a roadblock to enrollment. Once enrolled, the school counselor will contact the school of origin to obtain any necessary records. This contact may be via phone call, e-mail, or a faxed request for records. Enrollment will be immediate upon a placement determination.

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 school systems' point of contact (Sharon Spurlin, Jennifer Earnest, and Chris Thomasson) along with Covington County DHR's point of contact (Lynn Barnes or other case worker) will communicate about the child's placement. The child and the person with the decision-making rights will also be included in the discussion. The following are items that will be considered:
1. the child's preference,
2. the views of parents or the person with education decision-making rights,
3. the child's attachment to school and staff,
4. the placement of the child's siblings,
5. the availability and quality of services in the current and potential schools to meet the child's educational and social/emotional needs,
6. school climate/safety,
7. the impact of a school transfer, including the commute, and
8. the child's special needs.
Other documentation that may be used could include: report cards, progress reports, test scores, attendance data, IEP or 504 plans, and emails from individuals consulted during the best interest determination process. Once a determination has been made by the involved parties, enrollment will be immediate.

ESSA Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Description of transportation protocols and procedures to ensure students in foster care receive transportation to their school of origin. The procedures should 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, the LEA and child welfare agency responsibilities for providing transportation and description of the Dispute Resolution Policy. Dispute Resolution forms and templates may be uploaded to Related Documents.

LEAs and child welfare agencies must make every effort to collaborate in serving children in foster care. When a dispute arises between the agencies over paying the costs of transportation, the LEA and local child welfare agency must make every effort to resolve the dispute collaboratively at the local level. Documented patterns of excessive disputes to the SEA from particular LEAs and/or local child welfare agencies will be reviewed by the SEA and State child welfare agency and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure compliance by both local agencies.The SEA and State child welfare agency may establish a Memorandum of Understanding regarding appropriate measures to limit disputes and ensure compliance by both LEAs and local child welfare agencies. All parties are encouraged to seek assistance from the Foster Care Point of Contact at the State Education Agency (SEA), and the Education Coordinator at the State Child Welfare Agency (or similar personnel) prior to any dispute. Disputes between LEAs and child welfare agencies regarding implementing the local transportation procedures, calculating and paying for additional costs of transportation to the school of origin for children in foster care, or other inter-agency transportation disputes will be

resolved by a three-person panel including the SEA foster care point of contact, another SEA staff, and a representative of the state child welfare agency.
Either an LEA or a local child welfare agency can bring a transportation payment dispute to the SEA by submitting a dispute resolution request to the SEA foster care point of contact via an email with the subject “Foster Child Transportation Dispute.” The dispute resolution request must include:
·A complete explanation of the basis of the dispute, with all pertinent facts. ·The name and contact information of the people who have been addressing the dispute thus far on behalf of both the LEA and the local child welfare agency (phone, email and mailing address).
·Details of how the agencies have attempted to resolve the dispute at the local level prior to appealing to the state.
Within ten (10) days of receipt of the dispute resolution request, the SEA foster care point of contact will contact the party that did not submit the request (either the LEA or child welfare agency) identifying the subject matter of the dispute and inviting that party to submit any information pertinent to the dispute. The party will have ten (10) days to submit its explanation of the dispute, with all pertinent facts. Documents submitted by either party after the applicable deadlines will not be considered.
The panel shall make a final decision within thirty (30) days of receiving all information related to the dispute. The SEA foster care contact will forward the written decision and an explanation of that decision to the appropriate parties at both the LEA and local child welfare agency. The decision shall be the final resolution.

ESSA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(ii)-(iii) Describe protocol for a child in foster care to be immediately enrolled in a new school.
After the decision of school placement has been made, contact will be made with the receiving school counselor. Enrollment will take place immediately with no barriers. If some paperwork is missing, DHR employees and school counselors will work together to retrieve it.