

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY

JFABF

Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care and their equal access to the same free and appropriate public education through high school graduation as provided to other students as required by law. Educational stability has a lasting impact on students' academic achievement and well-being, and the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District is committed to supporting district and community efforts to ensure that students in foster care have access to high-quality, stable educational experiences.

The law requires that foster care students continue to attend their school of origin, unless after a collaborative decision-making process it is determined to be in the student's best interest to enroll in and attend school in the district in which a foster care provider or facility is located (if different). The law also requires that when it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the student is immediately enrolled in a new school district, even if records normally required for enrollment cannot be quickly produced. Additionally, the law requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the school district to designate respective points of contact; and also, that the district collaborate with DCF to ensure that students will receive transportation to the school of origin if needed.

Best Interest Determination

Decisions about whether a student in foster care should continue to attend the school of origin should be made collaboratively by DCF, the student (if age appropriate), the student's family and/or foster family, (or if different, the person authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of the student), the school and district of origin, and (if different) the local district where the student is placed. Best interest determinations should focus on the needs of each individual student. Every effort should be made to reach agreement regarding the appropriate school placement of a student in foster care. However, if there is disagreement regarding school placement for a student in foster care, DCF will finalize the best interest determination.

The district can seek review of DCF's decision by utilizing a Foster Care School Selection Dispute Resolution Process established by DESE and DCF. Decisions made through this process are not subject to review. Under the law, to promote educational stability, students should continue to attend their schools of origin while best interest determinations are being made.

Transportation

For students who are placed in a district or home outside of their district of origin, the district of origin must collaborate with DCF on how transportation will be provided and arranged to ensure that students care who need transportation to remain in their district of origin will receive such transportation while they are in foster care.

Transportation options may include using Title I funds, establishing regional collaborations among district, coordinating with existing routes for transportation, seeking help from foster parent(s), etc. If there are no other agreements between the district and DCF, the district of origin is responsible for providing transportation to and from the district of origin.

Immediate enrollment

If it is in the best interest of a student in foster care to leave the district of origin, the student must be enrolled in school in the district immediately where s/he now resides. To minimize disruption of the student's education, the law requires the district to enroll the student in a new school right away, without

waiting to receive the typical student enrollment documentation (other than emergency contact information). The enrolling district must immediately contact the student's district of origin to obtain the relevant records and documentation, and the district of origin should immediately transfer those records.

When enrolling students, to facilitate the enrollment, DCF representatives will present the district with a form that indicates that the student is in foster care, along with their DCF state-agency identification badge.

LEGAL REFS.: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008

Adopted by the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee:
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Second Reading: February 26, 2020