

# Northeast Dubois School Corporation

## Foster Care and Homeless Student Transportation Plan

### Foster Point of Contact and McKinney-Vento Liaison:

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### **Overview**

Northeast Dubois School Corporation (NDSC) will work in collaboration with parents, guardians, students, other school corporations and the local and state Department of Child Services (DCS) as appropriate to ensure equitable educational access for a child in foster care or living in a state of homelessness. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), children in foster care and in a state of homelessness will always be allowed to enroll in their school of origin or school of residence as required under both federal and state law.

### **Foster Student Transportation**

#### **Identification**

The DCS Educational Liaison (EL) and/or Northeast Dubois Point of Contact (POC) will identify children in foster care, who are in need of transportation assistance, by keeping in open communication.

#### **Transportation for Students in Foster Care**

When a child's placement changes and there is the potential for an educational placement to also change, a referral to the DCS will be completed. If the child's school of origin is an Northeast Dubois school and the child is placed in a foster home outside of Northeast Dubois boundaries, the district POC will work with the DCS Educational Liaison (EL) and possibly the foster family, to determine if the school of origin remains the school of best interest for the child. This determination will primarily be based on the utilization and completion of the "POC Checklist for Decision Making: Best Interests in School of Origin Determination" document by the EL and DCS Family Case Manager (FCM).

The following considerations are included in that form.

- How long is the placement expected to last and what is the plan for permanency?
- How many schools has the child attended this year? The past few years?
- Which school does the child prefer? Why?
- Would the timing of the transfer coincide with a logical juncture such as after testing, end of semester, or end of the school year?
- Are there medical, educational, and/or mental health issues that may impact safety during transportation?
- Is the current school receiving a failing grade?

If/when the "POC Checklist" is approved by the DCS Local Office Director (LOD), the form is sent to the Northeast Dubois POC and she and the EL consult to make final determination on "...the child's best interests for school enrollment and transportation needs".

If/when it is determined that Northeast Dubois's normal transportation model will not fulfill the need of providing transportation for the child in foster care Northeast Dubois's POC will communicate with the foster family, DCS, and a neighboring school district if applicable, to determine the safest, most cost effective and efficient manner to transport the child to and from school every day during the placement.

Additional costs for transportation (whether in-district or out-of-district) will be financed through one of the following methods as provided for under ESSA.

- Title funds as available
- Northeast Dubois funds as available to reimburse for mileage and/or pay drivers.
- DCS funds if/when available and necessary
- Neighboring school district funds if it happens to be school of origin/residence

Additional costs are calculated by the Northeast Dubois Transportation Office and take into account the availability of district transportation, the distance of the child's residence from the nearest applicable bus stop, and any related fuel and staffing costs necessary in order to provide transportation.

The time required in order for the district to arrange transportation varies depending upon a number of factors such as current demand, availability of staff and/or vehicles, and location of the student. For this reason, if transportation is requested the foster family or DCS may need to arrange for temporary transportation of the child(ren) for at least one week/5 school days.

### **Disputes**

It is recognized that both Northeast Dubois, DCS and when applicable, a neighboring school district, will act with the best interests of children in mind. However, since all parties are approaching this issue from different perspectives, disputes will naturally sometimes occur. In the event of a dispute regarding the transportation of a child in foster care, Northeast Dubois (if determined to be the school of origin) will provide transportation until such time as the dispute is resolved.

\*Adjustments and exceptions to the above plan will be made as determined by the IDOE, DCS, ESSA and any other laws, statutes or guidelines that apply

## **Homeless Student Transportation**

### **Identification and Determining Best Interest School of Origin**

When an identified homeless student enrolls, or begins the enrollment process at an Northeast Dubois school, an attempt will be made to confirm that it's the parent and/or student's wish and in the student's best interest to attend the Northeast Dubois school.

The Northeast Dubois MV Liaison and/or other appropriate school personnel will communicate with the parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth about the following:

- Ensure the student and parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth understand the school options.
- Reinforce the importance of school stability and educational continuity; and
- Discuss with the homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth their unique circumstances, and assist them in making the most appropriate choice.

To determine the best interest, in terms of school attendance, for each student, the following questions will be asked. Those involved in the discussion could/should include Northeast Dubois's MV Liaison, MV Liaison from other school(s) involved, parents/guardians, students and other appropriate school personnel.

- How permanent does the current living situation appear to be?
- How many schools has the student attended over the past few years? This year?
- How have past school transfers affected the student?
- How deep are the student's ties to his/her current school?
- How anxious is the student about an upcoming or recent move?
- How strong is the student academically?
- What is the nature, duration and quality of the student's relationships in the current school?
- How do programs in the current school compare to those at the school of origin?
- Will the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture, such as after testing, after an event significant to the student, or at the end of the school year?
- How would the length of the commute to and from the school of origin impact the student's education?
- Are there any safety issues to consider?
- What other factors did the team consider when making the best interest decision?

\*\*The "Best Determination Worksheet; Transportation Plan" should be completed and signed off on by the MV liaisons from all school corporations involved.

### **Transportation for Students Identified as "Homeless"**

If/when it is determined that attending an Northeast Dubois school is in the student's best interest, the following will occur to arrange for transportation.

\*If the student resides within the Northeast Dubois district and it's determined that regular bus transportation or walking, if within the walking boundaries, is appropriate, that is what will be arranged with the student, parent, guardians.

\*If the student resides outside the Northeast Dubois district then arrangements will be made between the MV Liaison, transportation department, student/family and any other appropriate school personnel to transport the student to and from the Northeast Dubois school every school day.

\*If the school corporation, other than Northeast Dubois, where the student resides is able to assist with and share transportation responsibilities of the student an arrangement will be made to make that happen. If a dispute develops between corporations the expectation is that costs/responsibility will be shared.

\*If the student's/family's status as "homeless" changes during the school year, the responsibility of transporting the student to and from his/her school of origin will continue through the end of the school year, unless the student/family declines the offer.

\*\*IDOE resources related to homeless and foster students will be consulted as necessary to assist with decisions.