

Humboldt Unified School District

Foster Care Transportation Plan

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 contains educational provisions to promote educational stability and success for students in foster care.

A student in foster care is *a child or youth in the custody of a child welfare agency (i.e. Department of Child Safety or Tribal Social Services) and placed away from parents/legal guardians*. This might include students in a licensed or non-licensed kinship placement, foster home, group home, residential facility, or other such placement.

Provisions for students in foster care include:

- Remaining enrolled in their school of origin for the duration of their time in care, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to attend the school of origin.

The term school of origin means the school in which the student was enrolled at the time of placement in foster care, including preschool. If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of the placement change.

Humboldt Unified School District (HUSD) will work in collaboration with parents, guardians, concerned adults, students, and the Child Welfare Agency (CWA) to ensure equitable access to a child in foster care's school of origin. Children in foster care will always be allowed to enroll in their school of origin or school of residence as required under both federal and state law.

Transportation for children in foster care will be provided by the foster family, CWA or HUSD utilizing the most cost-effective means to do so. If the child's school of origin is an HUSD school and the child is placed in a foster home outside of HUSD boundaries, the district will work with CWA and/or the foster family to determine if the school of origin remains the school of best interest for the child. The determination will primarily take the following into consideration:

- The wishes of the child;
- The wishes of the foster family (according to state law);
- The wish of CWA;
- The distance and time required for travel;
- The safety of the child;
- Any applicable services available at the school of residence vs. the school of origin.

Additional costs are calculated by the district 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 students.

While HUSD believes that the school of best interest for a child is most often their school of origin, this is not always the case. Sometimes, the commute time and/or distance is so great that transporting the child would have a negative impact on the child's social and/or academic life. For this reason, HUSD follows general guidance on what the district considers to be a reasonable commute distance and time.

- Commute distance: 20 miles
- Commute time (one way): 30 minutes

The CWA point-of-contact will identify children in foster care, who are in need of transportation assistance, and contact the HUSD point-of-contact, the HUSD foster liaison. Additional costs for transportation (whether in-district or out-of-district) will be financed through one of the following methods as provided for under the ESSA and federal regulation (ESEA 1112(c)(5)(B)):

- CWA agrees to reimburse HUSD for any additional cost;

- HUSD agrees to pay for the additional cost;
- CWA and HUSD agree to share the additional cost;

If it is decided that it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child is immediately enrolled in the new school, or school of residence, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. This would include, but not be limited to, a birth certificate, immunization record, former school record, or proof of residency.

Students in foster care may also receive assistance with the following:

- Enrollment in school
- Backpacks and school supplies
- Clothing, toiletries, and other basic needs
- Information on school programs, including early childhood programs
- Referrals to community resources

ESSA requires that districts designate a point of contact to facilitate communication and collaboration with the Arizona Department of Education, and the state and local child welfare agencies, and to participate in the discussion around best interest, school changes, enrollment, educational services, and other concerns. If you have questions or concerns about your student in foster care, you may contact HUSD's Family Resource Specialist, (928) 759-5104.