FOSTER CARE STUDENT TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURE

The Board has adopted the following transportation procedures to ensure collaboration with the state or the local child welfare agency (CWA) to ensure the educational stability of a student in foster care, including assurances that:

1. Foster care students remain in their school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in their best interest; and
2. When a determination is made that it is not in the best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child must be immediately enrolled in a new school.

Transportation Plan Process

1. A representative of the relevant CWA shall give clear notice to the District, as soon as practical that a student in foster care needs, or may need, transportation to a district school that is the student's school of origin. Such notice may be given in writing or verbally directly to the district's Foster Care Point of Contact.

   When a student's placement is outside of the boundary of their school of origin, the local CWA shall promptly notify and collaborate with the District to convene a best interest determination meeting.

2. When the District is notified that a student in foster care needs, or may need, transportation to a district school serving as the student's school of origin, the district's Foster Care Point of Contact, in consultation with others, will promptly[1] take steps to determine best interest decision and establish an individualized transportation plan that addresses how transportation will be arranged, provided, and funded for the duration of time that the student is in foster care and attending the school of origin.

   In the interim, the District and the local CWA must jointly develop and implement a plan to provide temporary transportation to ensure the student's educational stability.

   The District must ensure that transportation is provided to a student in foster care even if transportation is not offered to non-foster care students.

   a. The district's Foster Care Point of Contact shall establish and develop a transportation plan for the student in consultation with a representative of the local CWA, appropriate district staff (e.g., Superintendent, Title I coordinator, school of origin transportation designee, coordinator for special education, McKinney-Vento liaison), representatives from another school district (if applicable), and may also include obtaining input from others who may be involved in education or other decision-making for the student, such as the foster parent or designated caregiver.

   b. Multiple factors will be considered and addressed in the best interest determination when determining transportation options for a student in foster care, including, but not limited to: safety of the foster care student and other students being transported; student age; length of commute; and distance. The cost of transportation must never be a factor when determining best interest determination. Information from the school of origin transportation designee about these factors will be provided so that

[1] No more than five days from when notice was given to the District that a student in foster care needs transportation is recommended.

the best interest determination will be comprehensive and will include consideration of cost-effective measures.

The following options must be considered to provide school of origin transportation (see FDH-E2):

i. An existing bus route can be used;
ii. An existing bus route can be modified slightly to accommodate the new address;
iii. Specialized transportation offered to other students can be accessed, such as special education (IEP) or McKinney-Vento transportation;
iv. Existing special education transportation can be modified slightly to accommodate the new address;
v. Arranging transportation by the foster parent/designated caregiver to the school of origin or to a bus stop on a route to the school of origin;
vi. Coordinating with the district in which the student is living to provide transportation to the District boundaries or an existing bus stop within the District;
vii. Public transportation; and
viii. Walking within a reasonable walk zone (based on safety, disability, age, etc.)

c. The transportation plan for the student must be in writing and include the following information (see FDH-E2):

i. Student name;
ii. Contact information (address, phone and/or email)
iii. Current school district;
iv. A transportation strategy for providing transportation to and from the school of origin on school days, inclusive of identifying the method(s) of transportation, the person or entity responsible for providing the transportation, and if applicable, the person or entity who is responsible for making any specific arrangements that are necessary to the implementation of any mode of transportation;
v. To the extent applicable, a description of how the student's school-related transportation will be funded, particularly when the planned transportation involves additional costs as defined under applicable laws and regulations; and
vi. A communication protocol that the District, CWA, and other relevant persons, such as the student's foster parent or designated caregiver, may use in order to address any questions or concerns that arise with the transportation plan, including considering possible adjustments to the student's transportation plan, and any relevant changes in the student's placement or foster care status that are relevant to the transportation plan.

3. A student needing transportation to the school of origin must promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with the local CWA's authority to use child welfare funding for school of origin transportation.

If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, the District will provide transportation to the school of origin if:

a. The local CWA agrees to reimburse the District for the cost of such transportation;

b. The District and local CWA agree to share the cost;

c. The District agrees to pay for the cost of such transportation; or

d. The school of origin, local CWA, school of residence and/or placing CWA share the cost of such transportation.

4. The CWA in consultation with the district's Foster Care Point of Contact and key partners, as applicable, shall make the best interest transportation determination for the student in foster care.

5. The CWA and/or the district's Foster Care Point of Contact shall notify the foster parent or designated caregiver of the decision. If transportation to the school of origin is in the best interest of the student, the district's Foster Care Point of Contact shall contact the school of origin transportation designee to make the necessary arrangements.

Transportation must be provided for the duration of the student's time in foster care as long as it continues to be in the student's best interest to remain in their school of origin. If a student exits foster care before the end of a school year, the transportation arrangement shall be maintained through the end of the school year to maintain the student's educational stability if possible.

Dispute Resolution

The District and local CWA shall make every effort to expeditiously reach an agreement regarding the method of transportation and/or the funding of any additional costs associated with providing such transportation to the school of origin for a student in foster care at the local level. If the District and local CWA cannot resolve a dispute about transportation method or cost, the aggrieved parties shall notify the district's Foster Care Point of Contact and follow the dispute resolution procedure adopted by the District (see FDH-BR2).

End of Manvel School District #125 Board Reg. FDH-BR1.....Approved: 2/11/19