

# TATE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



EDUCATIONAL **STABILITY**  
*for* CHILDREN *in*  
**FOSTER CARE**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Tate County School District to enroll and withdraw children that have been placed under the care of the Mississippi Child Protection Service.

## **Goal**

Tate County School District in collaboration with Tate County Division of Child Protection Services ensures that children placed in foster care have stability with regards to their education.

## **Definitions**

**District Point of Contact (DPC)** – the person designated by the Tate County School District Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district. The District Point of Contact will communicate directly with the Regional Director of Child Protective Services.

**School Point of Contact (SPC)** – the person designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school. The School Point of Contact will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact. The School Point of Contact will ensure that any and all student records are obtained when a foster child enrolls in the local school and that any and all student records are provided to the Child Protective Service Case Work when a foster child withdraws from the local school.

**Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS)** – the person from Child Protective Services who will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact and with the Child Protective Service Case Worker in charge of the case for a particular foster child.

**Case Worker** – the person from Child Protective Services who has been assigned the case of a child in foster care.

**Foster Child** – a child to whom the custody has been appointed to Child Protective Services by a sitting judicial authority.

**Foster Parent** – the parent(s) to whom a foster child is currently residing.

## **Enrollment of a Foster Child**

### **Resident Foster Children**

Foster children residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled as any other student that resides within the boundaries of the district. The School Point of Contact (SPC) shall obtain any and all records pertaining to the student's current education. See Appendix A Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist (SPC) and Records Checklist for Case Worker/Foster Parent Enrolling a Child (CPS). **Students must be enrolled by a MDCPS representative (i.e., case worker, educational liaison, or an individual with MDCPS foster parent verification.) MDCPS foster parent verification may come in the form of the court order or a letter/form on letterhead from MDCPS stating the person is the foster parent for the enrolling student.**

Following the enrollment of the student the SPC will complete the enrollment document placing a copy on file in the office of the SPC. The SPC will notify the DPC of the enrollment and enrollment verification will be kept at the school of enrollment until the student graduates from TCSD or until the child is no longer in the care of Child Protective Services.

### **Non-Resident Foster Children**

Foster children not residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled once a determination has been made that it is in the best interest of the child to attend a school within the Tate County School District. The DPC from the originating district will collaborate with CPS, SPC, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, or other interested parties. A determination as to whether or not it would be in the best interest of the child to attend the school in the Tate County School District shall be made immediately following this collaboration. Schools will need a copy of this BID Form when the student arrives to be enrolled.

**EXCEPTION:** students enrolling into Kindergarten for the first time do not require a BID form to be completed if the foster parents can prove residency in the school zone they are seeking to attend.

**Students must be enrolled by a MDCPS representative (i.e., case worker, educational liaison, or an individual with MDCPS foster parent verification.) MDCPS foster parent verification may come in the form of the court order or a letter/form on letterhead from MDCPS stating the person is the foster parent for the enrolling student.**

The Tate County School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend the child's school of origin provided that it is reasonable.

### **Withdrawal of a Student by CPS**

CPS has the right to withdraw students assigned to them by a judicial authority. CPS workers will work with the DPC to complete a BID Form to determine the best interest of the student. The SPC in this case is responsible for providing as many educational records as possible to make any transition from the school of origin to the new school a smooth transition. Records not on file in the school office shall be forwarded to the new school within 24 hours following a request by the school or CPS. **See Appendix A Records Checklist for Case**

The SPC shall contact the DPC if he/she thinks it would be in the best interest for the child being withdrawn to remain in the school of origin. The DPC will immediately contact the Regional Director of Child Protective Services to relay the concerns of the SPC as well as possibly scheduling a time to discuss the child's educational placement.

### **Student Records**

In January 2013, Congress passed the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), which amended the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to permit educational agencies and institutions to disclose, without parental consent or the consent of an eligible student, education records of students in foster care to State and Tribal child welfare agencies.

MDCPS workers should provide copies of all educational records for school-age children in foster care when registering the child.

Records should include but not limited to the following:

- copy of birth certificate,
- copy of immunization form,
- withdrawal from previous school,
- grades from previous school,
- class schedule for junior high and high school students,
- copy of the most recent IEP if the student receives services from IDEA,
- copy of language service plan if the student received English Learner services, and
- any other record that will assist the school in the enrollment of the student.

### **Free/Reduced Lunch Application**

Foster Care Parents or Child Protective Services should complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Form for the Tate County School District. The form along with verification of foster care shall be submitted to the School Point of Contact who in turn will forward the documents to the District Point of Contact. The District Point of Contact will forward the documents to the Food Service Director.

### **School of Origin**

These provisions emphasize the importance of limiting educational disruption by keeping the children who move into foster care (due to entering the foster care system or changing placements) in their schools of origin, unless it is determined in their best interest to change schools.

### **Best Interest Determination (BID)**

- The LEA and MDCPS must determine the best interest of a child in foster care collaboratively.
- The cost of transportation cannot be considered when determining the best interest of the child.

**Considerations:**

- The child's participation in specialized instruction (e.g. gifted programming, career and technical education program, College Credit Plus, Advanced Placement classes, dual-credit classes).
- The availability of required special education and/or related service in a school other than the school of origin when the student has an identified disability under IDEA and 504.
- The availability of language services in a school other than the school of origin when the student has been identified as an English Learner pursuant to Title VI and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act.
- The student's ability to earn full academic credit, the ability to proceed to the next grade, or the ability to graduate on time.
- School climate, peer support, supportive adults and involvement in extracurricular activities.
- The availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs.
- The impact the commute to and from school would have on the student, based on developmental functioning. The cost of transportation or the appropriate services should not be a consideration when determining a child's best interest.
- For children with disabilities, the Fostering Connections Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federal requirements are to be factored in when determining the best interest.
- The safety of the child.
- The wishes of the parent, caregiver, and child.
- The toll of the commute, distance and time for the child to travel to and from the school he/she is attending at the time of placement.
- The projected duration of out-of-home placement.
- The child's academic, developmental and socialization needs.
- The effect a school change will have on the child's learning.
- The potential loss of credits, for high school students, which may occur due to changing schools in the middle of a term or semester.

## **Responsibilities of TCSD**

The TCSD will notify MDCPS if children are coming to school improperly dressed or without materials needed to support success. TCSD shall consider MDCPS as the guardian of students in foster care; therefore, foster parents or group home staff should not be making educational decisions for the child/children. TCSD should be made aware of the trauma children in foster care experience and associated behaviors. TCSD and MDPS should collaborate with regards to treatment goals that can be incorporated in the child's BIP or IEP, if possible. TCSD and/or MDCPS workers may invite foster parents, therapists and/or group home staff to participate in educational related meetings.

## **Transportation**

Some children in foster care may need transportation to remain in their school of origin. Any child in foster care needing transportation to their school of origin must promptly receive transportation services. If the child remains in their school of origin and moves outside the current school's attendance zone, the Tate County School District must collaborate with the local MDCPS to develop and implement clear written transportation procedures in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 299.13(c)(1)(ii). The two entities must establish a system that expedites transportation for children placed in foster care. The goal is to maintain educational stability for the student. There are various modes of transportation available for students. Examples of no-cost or low-cost options for transportation that the Tate County School District and the MDCPS could explore include whether:

MDCPS will arrange for the child to be dropped off at a school bus stop for the school of origin;

MDCPS will arrange for the foster parent or other designee to transport the child to school (mileage reimbursable through foster care maintenance payments);

MDCPS and the TCSD will review pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the foster care placement that cross district boundaries, such as bus routes for magnet schools and transportation for homeless students as required by the McKinney-Vento Act;

MDCPS and the TCSD will determine if the child is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs;

MDCPS and the TCSD will address how the child welfare agency will use foster care maintenance payments and administrative funds to pay for transportation to the school;

MDCPS and the TCSD will specify how "additional costs" of transportation will be calculated, to delineate clearly the TCSD's responsibility to provide transportation when there are no additional costs;

MDCPS and the TCSD will specifically describe how transportation to the school of origin will be provided in situations where there are no additional costs; and

MDCPS and the TCSD will specify the timing and procedures for the child welfare agency to reimburse the WVSD for transportation costs.

In the event of a dispute between the TCSD and MDCPS concerning the cost of transportation, the two entities must consider what is in the best interest of the student. If the disagreement continues, the cost will be divided equally between the TCSD and MDCPS. The dispute shall be brought before the state appointed POCs. Current transportation expenses shall remain in effect until a decision is rendered to maintain the student's status quo.

# Appendix A

- Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist**
- Records Checklist for Case Worker Withdrawing a Child**
- Records Checklist for Case Worker Enrolling a Child**
- Children in Foster Care Best Interest Determination Worksheet**
- Transportation Agreement Form**
- Dispute Resolution to State Level Point of Contact**

## Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist

The following records are required for enrollment of a child in foster care:

Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and Progress Reports
- € Discipline Records
- € Student Achievement
- € Teacher Evaluations
- € Attendance Records
- € Written input from absent participants
- € IEP and/or 504 Plan
- € Cumulative File and Transcript showing current credits if high school student
- € Withdrawal from Previous School
- € Copy of Birth Certificate
- € Copy of Immunization Form
- € Foster Parent's proof of residency
- € Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## Records Checklist for Case Worker Withdrawing a Child

### Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- € Current Grades
- € Discipline Records
- € List of student activities, if junior high or high school student
- € Attendance Records
- € IEP and/or 504 Plan
- € Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- € Withdrawal Form
- € Copy of Birth Certificate
- € Copy of Immunization Form
- € Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Records Checklist for Case Worker Enrolling a Child

### Supporting Documentation:

- € Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- € Withdrawal Form from Previous School if available
- € Copy of Birth Certificate
- € Copy of Immunization Form
- € Completed Registration Packet
- € Completed Free/Reduced Lunch Application
- € Verification Document for Foster Care Placement
- € Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Rationale

*Promote educational stability by ensuring that students in foster care can perform at the same high levels as their peers with limited disruption by first determining what is in the youth's best interest.*

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) stipulates that foster care students should only change schools if remaining in

### *How to Make A Best Interest Determination*

**the school of origin is not in the student's best interest.**

- If a change in school is being considered, the local education agency (LEA) and child welfare agency (CWA) must collaborate to complete the Best Interest Determination (BID) process.
- The MDCPS case worker or designee and the school of origin POC should engage in a conversation with the youth and any other appropriate parties to discuss the following information as it relates to the youth's educational stability:
  - Number of schools the youth has attended
  - How often the youth is changing schools
  - Home placement type/length as well as number of placements
  - Youth's involvement in extracurricular / community activities
  - The youth's academic/career goals
  - The youth's academic achievement
  - The youth's ability to earn full academic credits, participate in sports, graduate on time, etc.
  - The student's ability to receive necessary supports/services
  - What the youth wants, what the family wants, what the resource family wants, what CPS wants
  - School safety concerns
  - Youth's access to gifted or accelerated programs
  - If changing schools could affect the youth's end of year testing
  - Travel time to and from school
  - Biological family, resource family, friends, mentor, residential staff, MDCPS connections
  - Youth's relationships and connections to teachers and school staff
- The conversation will result in a determination that should be recorded on the BID Form. All parties who participate should be listed on the BID Form with the corresponding signature.
- Youth shall remain enrolled in their school of origin until the BID process is complete and a determination has been made.
- If the determination is made for the youth to change schools, the youth should be enrolled immediately in the new school even if the required paperwork is not available.
- The enrolling school's Foster Care Point of Contact (POC) will contact the school of origin to obtain necessary documentation.

- There must be a school of origin in order for the BID process to occur. With no school of origin, the normal school enrollment process will occur.

Is the youth's home placement 60 miles or more from the youth's school of origin?  YES  NO

STUDENT INFORMATION	
Youth's Name:	Youth's DOB:
Date of BID:	Current Academic Grade Classification:
School of Origin:	
MDCPS Case Worker or Designee:	Phone:
Youth's COR:	IEP Ruling? <input type="checkbox"/> YES* <input type="checkbox"/> NO

**\*A placement meeting should be scheduled with the new school's POC.**

DETERMINATION
<input type="checkbox"/> The student will remain in the school of origin. Reason for Determination: Name of School:
<input type="checkbox"/> The student will change schools and be enrolled in the school/district of his/her current residence. Reason for Determination: Name of School:

	<i>Participants</i>	
	<i>Only indicate who participates in the decision</i>	
	<b>ROLE</b>	

Child's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

MSIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Custodial Agent Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Educational Representative, if applicable (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

District Foster Care Point of Contact (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Case Worker (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The custodial agency verifies that:

1. It is in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin based on the following factors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Eligibility of the child under Title IV-E from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

a. If YES, reimbursement for some funding of transportation costs:

\_\_\_\_\_ will be pursued

\_\_\_\_\_ cannot be pursued for the reason below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. The following was executed to identify a no-cost or low-cost transportation service:

The district verifies that:

\_\_\_\_\_

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4. There is an existing transportation option that can serve the student's new housing placement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If YES, explain the option:

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---

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that the most cost effective transportation procedures for this student will be:

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---

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that while permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation arrangements will be:

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These transportation procedures were agreed to on the following date: \_\_\_\_\_ and will be implemented within five (5) days, by the following date: \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signature Mississippi Child Protective Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Dispute Resolution to State Level Point of Contact**

To appeal the district's decision to the Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, please complete this form and submit it by the date indicated on the Written Notice you received from the school. You may submit this form by any of the following methods:

- Scan and email it to Terrissa Williams [TWilliams@mdek12.org](mailto:TWilliams@mdek12.org) with the subject "Foster Child Dispute Appeal" to Terissa Williams, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact;

**OR**

- Return the paper form to Terissa Williams, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact at 359 N. West Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School in which enrollment is sought: \_\_\_\_\_

I am the educational decision-maker for this student, and I believe the school in which we are seeking enrollment is in the student's best interest because:

I believe the student has a right to attend this school because:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ If you would like to provide additional information, please

attach it to this form. The

student shall remain in the school of origin, receiving all appropriate educational services including transportation, until the dispute reaches its final resolution.

Educational decision-maker name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Tate County School District Foster Care Plan and Procedures Approved by the Tate County School Board:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Terri Reeves, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Alee Dixon, Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amy Williams<sup>1</sup>, Federal Programs Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





## **Transportation Agreement Form**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

MSIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Custodial Agent Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Educational Representative, if applicable (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

District Foster Care Point of Contact (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Case Worker (Name and Contact Information):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The custodial agency verifies that:

1. It is in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin based on the following factors:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Eligibility of the child under Title IV-E from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services:

\_\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

A. IF YES, reimbursement for some funding of transportation costs:

\_\_\_\_\_ will be pursued

\_\_\_\_\_ can not be pursued for the reason below:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The following was executed to identify a no-cost or low-cost transportation service:

The district verifies that:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. There is an existing transportation option that can serve the students' new housing placement.

\_\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If yes, please explain the option:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that the most cost effective transportation procedures for this student will be:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that while permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation arrangements will be:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These transportation procedures were agreed to on the following date: \_\_\_\_\_ and will be implemented within five (5) days, by the following date: \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signature

Mississippi Child Protective Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

