Perry County School District

Foster Care Procedural Handbook

2025-2026

BOARD APPROVED

JUL 10 2025

PERRY COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Purpose

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

Goal

Perry County School District, in collaboration with Perry 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 Perry County School District Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district.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.

Perry County School District Point of Contact
Allison Temple, Federal Programs Director
601-964-3211, atemple@pcsdms.us

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designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school.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 that 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 that 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.

Best Interest Determination (BID) – refers the collaborative process between MDCPS and local school districts based on the individual student's unique best interests. The determination involves input from multiple parties to make decisions about whether a student placed in foster care should continue to attend his or her school of origin.

School of Origin – refers to the school that a student was attending at the time of placement in foster care or the last school the student attended, despite a change in home. To ensure continuity in education, remaining in the school of origin is preferred.

School District of Origin – refers to the Mississippi school district in which a school of origin is physically located.

The District will provide MDE with the name and contact information of the District POC at the beginning of each school year. The POC and his/her contact information will be posted on the District's website for ease of contact. Any changes to the District POC before the end of the academic year will be provided to the MDE POC.

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 SPC shall obtain any and all records pertaining to the student's current education. Students will not be enrolled without the CPS Caseworker present.

Following the enrollment of the student, the SPC will complete the enrollment document placing a copy on file in the office of the SPC while forwarding the original to the DPC. The DPC will keep on file the original until the student withdraws or graduates from the Perry County School District or 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 Perry County School District. The DPC, in collaboration with CPS, will meet with the 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 Perry County School District shall be made immediately following this meeting.

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

PCSD will only enroll foster children if the School of Origin is a PCSD school or if the current foster parents can prove residency in the Perry County School District Attendance Zone.

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

CPS has the right to withdraw students assigned to them by a judicial authority. 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 2 business days following a request by the school or CPS.

The CPS Caseworker shall complete the BID Form and send it to the DPC. The DPC will send the signed BID Form to the CPS Caseworker and, if the School of Origin is selected as the child's best interest, 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.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Once the DPC confirms a student's placement in Foster Care, the DPC will complete a Direct Certification via Foster Care Status with the Child Nutrition Director.

Best Interest Determination (BID)

The District will coordinate with MDCPS to finalize a BID within seven (7) school days from the date the District is notified, by MDCPS, of child's placement in foster care or change in the child's living arrangement, except in emergency removal situations.

During the BID determination period, the District will ensure the child is permitted to remain in his or her school of origin and the District will document how transportation shall be provided, arranged, and funded during the pendency of the BID decision. *See Policy EDA*

The BID decision will involve input from multiple, relevant parties who have the authority to make decisions regarding the child in foster care, and who have the knowledge and expertise about the child and the child's circumstances to determine whether a student in foster care should continue to attend his or her school of origin. These parties may include:

1. MDCPS representative;
2. Student, if applicable;
3. Child's foster family;
4. Individual from receiving school district;
5. Counselor;
6. Guardian Ad Litem; and,
7. Biological Parent, if determined by MDCPS or Court Order.

If there is disagreement regarding school placement for a student in foster care, MDCPS is the final decision maker. Students should continue to attend their schools of origin while BIDs are determined.

The District will consider all factors relating to a child's best interest. In evaluating the appropriateness of the current educational setting, the District will consider:

1. Appropriateness of the current educational setting (the school of origin),
2. Proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled (the school of origin) at the time of placement in foster care,
3. Preferences of the child's parent(s) or education decision maker(s) (individual legally authorized by the court to make educational decisions for a child in foster care);
4. Holistic and well-informed determination, utilizing a variety of student-centered factors including, but not limited to –

    a. Student's age and grade level;
    a. Student's preference, when age appropriate;
    b. Student's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers;
    c. Placement of the student's sibling(s);
    d. Distance/length of time to travel to/from school;
    e. Time of academic year, academic performance, and skills;
    f. Current educational goals and services; anticipated length of time in placement, and whether reunification is the family goal;
    g. Number of placements to date;
    h. Child's participation in specialized instruction (e.g., gifted programming, career technical education program, College Credit Plus, Advanced Placement classes);
    i. Availability of required special education and/or related services in a school other than the school of origin when the student has an identified disability under IDEA or Section 504;
    j. Availability of language services in a school other than the school of origin when the student has been identified as an English learner;
    k. Child's ability to earn full academic credit, the ability to proceed to the next grade, or the ability to graduate on time;
    l. School climate, peer support, supportive adults, and involvement in extracurricular activities;
    m. Availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs;
    n. Impact the commute to and from school would have on the child, based on developmental functioning. For children with disabilities, consider the IDEA's federal requirements when determining best interest;
    o. Any other relevant factors pertinent to the child.
5. Whether the student needs to remain in the school of origin for a limited time (e.g., until the end of the school year, the end of a testing or grading period).

6. Determine if it is appropriate to revisit the question of whether it is in the student's best to remain in the school of origin or enroll locally, and if so, document a specific time to reassess; and,
7. NOT consider the cost of transportation when determining a child's best interest.

REMAIN IN SCHOOL OF ORIGIN

When the District has determined that it is in the best interest of the child to remain in the school of origin, the District will document in the individualized student's plan regarding how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the student.

The District will document, in collaboration with MDCPS, the Transportation Plan that supports the District's obligations under state and federal law and follows all guidelines in MDE Rule 30.8, in order for the student to receive transportation services on the first day of the student's attendance. *See also policy EDA.*

LEAVE SCHOOL OF ORIGIN

When the District has determined it is in the best interest of the child to leave the school of origin, the enrolling district will:

1. Ensure enrollment in the new school takes place on the same day the student is enrolled, even if the child is unable to provide records normally required for enrollment.

    a. A student in foster care must be enrolled by a MDCPS representative.
    a. The District will confirm, in writing, the person responsible for making educational decisions. If a student is removed from the school, by anyone other than a MDCPS employee the district will notify MDE immediately, unless a court order states otherwise.
    b. The District will contact the school last attended (school of origin), within one (1) school day of enrollment, to obtain relevant academic and other records.
2. Update the student database and contact information for the student within one (1) school day of notification of enrollment from the custodial agency (MDCPS).
3. Ensure the student is assigned to a school in the district in the same manner and according to the same process used for all other students in the district.

4. Give foster children transferring into the District credit for full and/or partial coursework completed at their school of origin, in accordance with the District's policy on transfer credits.
5. Ensure each student in foster care shall be provided services comparable to other students in the school of attendance.
6. Ensure that it is documented that a student was withdrawn prior to the best interest determination, if applicable.

STUDENT RECORDS

Upon receipt of a written request for school records from a new school, the school district of origin shall forward, in a manner consistent with state and federal law, a complete copy of the records of the student in foster care. Information needed by the receiving school district shall include, but is not limited to:

1. Proof of age;
2. Immunization records;
3. Cumulative education file, if the child is attending a public school.
4. Copy of the current IEP, if the child is eligible for special education services;
5. Copy of the current Section 504 Plan, if the child has a Section 504;
6. Copy of health records kept by the school; and,
7. Any other pertinent information needed to assist the enrolling school in providing appropriate educational services.

The inability to receive records shall not delay student enrollment. Once a foster student is disenrolled by MDCPS, no other sharing of information shall occur. The District will comply with all state and federal law in order to protect student privacy.

Responsibilities of Perry County School District

The PCSD will notify MDCPS if children are coming to school improperly dressed or without materials needed to support success.

MDCPS is the guardian and recognizes that foster parents or group home staff should not be making educational decisions for the child/children.

PCSD should be made aware of the trauma children in foster care experience and associated behaviors. PCSD and MDPS should collaborate with regards to treatment goals that can be incorporated in the child's Behavior Intervention Plan or IEP, if possible.

PCSD and/or MDCPS workers may invite 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 LEA 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 LEAs 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 LEA 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 LEA will determine if the child is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs;
- MDCPS and LEA 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 LEA will specify how "additional costs" of transportation will be calculated, to delineate clearly the LEA's responsibility to provide transportation when there are no additional costs;
- MDCPS and LEA will specifically describe how transportation to the school of origin will be provided in situations where there are no additional costs; and
- MDCPS and LEA will specify the timing and procedures for the child welfare agency to reimburse the LEA for transportation costs.

In the event of a dispute between the LEA 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 LEA 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.

Funding Source for Transportation

In addition to state and local funds that may be available for providing transportation, certain federal funds may be available to cover additional transportation costs to the school of origin for students in foster care. Districts may use Title I funds to pay for additional costs needed to transport children in foster care to their schools of origin.

Additionally, Title IV-E funds which are earmarked for the child welfare training program was created as part of the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272) to support training in both foster care and adoption services. These funds are provided through the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services to aid with reasonable transportation costs that will enable foster care students to attend his or her school of origin. LEAs will need to consult with MDCPS regarding individual student's eligibility of Title IV-E child welfare funds. It is important to note that if a foster care student receives Title IV-E reimbursement, it is only available for the federal portion of transportation costs; LEAs are responsible for the non-federal portion. Cost-sharing to meet the match requirements for federal reimbursement is allowable, and is one way for LEAs and MDCPS to collaboratively meet their responsibilities for providing transportation and maximize use of available federal funds.

Multiple factors are utilized in determining reasonable transportation, including costs, distance, and duration. The MDCPS has sole authority in determining which cost to include in a child's foster care maintenance payment. These factors must be considered and part of the plan developed collaboratively between the LEA and local MDCPS.

Furthermore, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* requires that districts must ensure that transportation is provided for a child in foster care, regardless of whether the district provides transportation otherwise. This requirement includes students in foster care who attend public preschools. If an LEA offers a public preschool education, an LEA must meet the Title I requirements for children in foster care in preschool, including ensuring that a child in foster care remains in his or her preschool of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. (See *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* Section 1111(g)(1)(E)).

Additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin should reflect the difference between what an LEA otherwise would spend to transport a student to his or her assigned school and the cost of transporting a child in foster care to his or her school of origin. U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services (2016), Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care-Question 27 (https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf)

Note

MDCPS shall take reasonable steps to ensure that school-age foster children are registered for and attending accredited schools within three business days of initial placement or any placement change, including while placed in shelters or other temporary placements. (Olivia Y., et al v Barbour, et al. (Civil Action No. 3:04CV251LN)

Appendix A –
Best Interest Determination Form

BID Rationale
School placement of children in foster care.
When placing a child of school age in a foster care placement, the local social services agency making such placement shall, in writing, determine jointly with the local school district whether it is in the child's best interests to remain enrolled at the school in which he/she was enrolled prior to the most recent foster care placement or enroll in a new school..
A copy of the BID form must be submitted to the POC for new school district (if applicable), group home and/or treatment facilities.

Student Information		
Student Name:	**Grade:**	**Date of BID:**
District/School of Origin: (enter school name)		

Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services Information		
Case Worker: **ASWS:**	**County of Responsibility:**	**Phone:** **Phone:**

Determination

☐ The student shall remain in the district/school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement (**school of origin**).

Name of School District/School: (enter school name)

☐ Based on the best interest determination, a change in school placement is necessary. The student will be enrolled in the district/school of current residence (**receiving school**).

Name of School District/School:

NOTE: *If a change in educational placement is necessary, enrollment in the new school should take place* ***immediately.*** *All educational records should be provided to the receiving school. If a child has an* ***IEP, a placement meeting scheduled and the IEP shared with the new school district's POC prior to the meeting date.***

BID Participants

Title	Participated	Printed Name	Signature	Agree with Determination
Student	☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No
Birth Parent(s) if applicable	☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No
MDCPS POC- Case Worker or Supervisor	☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No
Guardian Ad Litem	☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No
POC for School District of Origin	☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No
Education Liaison (if applicable)	☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No

IEP Team Member (if applicable) Foster Parent (if applicable) Other	☐Yes ☐No ☐Yes ☐No ☐Yes ☐No			☐Yes ☐No ☐Yes ☐No ☐Yes ☐No

Supporting Documentation

Indicate and attach any supporting documentation which was used in making this determination of best interest to the receiving school district if applicable. (The following is checklist of sample documents that may be considered. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.)

- ☐Report cards
- ☐Progress reports
- ☐Achievement data (test scores)
- ☐Attendance data
- ☐IEP or 504 Plan
- ☐E-mails or correspondence from individuals consulted
- ☐Disciplinary referrals
- ☐Health reports/records

**Should an impasse be reached between the LEA and MDCPS, the BID packet should be forwarded to MDCPS Education Unit by the COR Worker and the LEA POC should forward a copy to MDE Compulsory School Attendance Unit POC.

Questions for the District of origin POC to discuss with MDCPS POC during the BID process

1. How many schools has the student attended, including natural transitions (elementary, middle, high)? How many schools has the student attended this year? What is the student's attendance record for this school year?

2. Describe all participants' views of the student's ties to his or her current school, including significant relationships/interactions, and involvement in extracurricular activities? (Include student/family voice as well as professional input.) Discuss family members, friends, and ties to school staff.

3. What is the student's academic/career goal? Does one school have programs and activities that address the unique needs or interests of the student that the other school does not have?

4. How is the student performing academically and behaviorally? What is the student's progress towards on-time graduation?

5. **Does the student participate in other specialized instruction or services (e.g., special education (IEP) or 504 accommodations, gifted program, career and technical program, therapeutic day treatment)?

   If the student has an IEP, is specialized transportation identified as a related service?

   ☐Yes ☐ No

6. If the student is an English learner, have the schools' ESL resources been considered? If so, explain?

7. Would changing schools affect the student's ability to earn full academic credit, participate in sports or other extra-curricular activities, proceed to the next grade, or graduate on time? If so, how?

8. How have the school transfers affected the student emotionally, socially, academically, and physically?

9. What are the safety considerations related to school placement?

10. Would the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture, such as after testing, after an event that is significant to the child, or at the end of the school year?

11. What are the transportation options being considered? How would the length of the commute to school impact the student?

12. Which school is preferred (and why) by:
    - the student
    - the birthparents (**if applicable)**
    - student's current placement provider i.e. group home/foster parent **(if applicable)**

Appendix B –
Foster Care Dispute Resolution Form

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 Twilliams@mdek12.orgwith the subject "Foster Child Dispute Appeal" to Terissa, 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: _____