

MERIDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Meridian Public School District to enroll, withdraw, and serve children placed under the care of the Mississippi Child Protection Service pursuant to the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Title I educational stability provisions.

Goal

Meridian Public School District in collaboration with Lauderdale County Division of Child Protection Services, ensures that children placed in foster care have stability with regard to their education.

Mission

The Meridian Public School District serves the community by engaging each student in an excellent education that develops skills and citizenship needed for success in a global society.

Definitions (with Roles and Responsibilities)

District Point of Contact (DPC) – the person designated by the Meridian Public School District Superintendent to represent the District with regard to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district.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. It will be the responsibility of the DPC to ensure that school personnel receive training regarding foster care children and school stability and that district procedures related to these students are followed. Other responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attend school
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes

District Point of Contact: Christine Beeker, Federal Programs Director; 601-484-4960;

cbeeker@mpsdconnect.org

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designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school. In most schools, this will be the school counselor. 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

Worker when a foster child withdraws from the local school. It will be the responsibility of the SPC to ensure that a best interest determination meeting is held when a foster child is withdrawn from school.

and to notify the District Point of Contact if there is a problem related to enrollment, withdrawal, or best interest determination of a foster child.

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 who has been assigned the case of a child in foster care.

Foster Child – a child for whom custody has been assigned to Child Protective Services by a sitting judicial authority.

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

Procedures

Resident Foster Children

Enrollment of a Foster Child

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. A list of these records is found in Appendix A of this document.

Following the enrollment of the student, the SPC will notify the DPC, forward copies of relevant records, and also keep on file. The DPC will keep relevant records until the student withdraws or graduates from the Meridian School District or the child is no longer in the care of Child Protective Services.

Best Interest Determination (BID) Form

- All students in CPS custody must have a signed BID form prior to enrollment.
- The BID must be signed within 3 days
- The DPC will email all relevant school personnel with the signed BID before the student is enrolled to ensure a smooth registration process.

Students in CPS Custody with an IEP

- All students in CPS custody must have a signed BID form prior to enrollment.
- If a student has an IEP, the DPC will request that CPS provide one prior to signing a BID.
- The BID must be signed by the DPC within 3 days.

- Upon signing the BID, the DPC will inform all relevant school personnel and the Office of Exceptional Education.
- OECE will schedule an IEP meeting once the student has been enrolled

Students in CPS Custody coming from an alternative setting

- All students in CPS custody must have a signed BID form prior to enrollment
- Upon signing the BID. the DPC will inform the home school personnel, the alternative school personnel, and OECE if needed.
    - If the student has an IEP coming from an alternative setting, the BID, IEP, and any relevant paperwork will be provided to the OECE personnel for review prior to signing the BID.
    - The BID must be signed by the DPC within 3 days upon receipt.
    - The IEP team will determine placement for the student.
- The student will stay at MPSD Alternative School (Marion Park/RISE Center) for a minimum of 10 days. Upon further evaluation, the next steps and placement will be determined.

MPSD reviews each BID on a case-by-case basis and makes decisions in the best interest of students.

Non-Resident Foster Children

Foster children no longer residing within the Meridian Public School District boundaries shall be allowed to remain in the school of origin, pending a determination that it is in the child's best interest to remain. The DPC or SPC will meet with the Case Worker or CPS representative, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, and other interested parties. The meeting shall occur within 3 business days after the placement changes or CPS requests withdrawal. A determination as to whether or not it would be in the child's best interest to attend the school in the Meridian Public School District shall be made immediately following this meeting. Meridian Public School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend the child's school of origin to ensure school stability except in cases where it is not in the child's best interest or not reasonable (due to excessive travel times or other factors). In a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the CPS will be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The CPS considers other non-educational factors (safety, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan). The CPS also has the capacity to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties, including the court in making these decisions.

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

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 one. 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. If the School Point of Contact has a problem with withdrawal or scheduling the Best Interest Determination meeting, he/she will notify the DPC who will contact the Regional Director.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Meridian Public School District does not require free and reduced lunch applications due to the Community Grant Program, which provides breakfast and lunch for all students at no cost.

Transportation Procedures

Children in foster care will be entitled to transportation services in the same manner as all other children in the school district. In addition to regular transportation routes, the school district will collaborate with the CPS when transportation is required to maintain children placed in foster care in a school of origin outside their usual attendance area or district when it is in the student's best interest. Under the direction of the Federal Programs Director, the POC will invite appropriate district officials, the CPS, and officials from other districts or agencies to promptly arrange cost-effective transportation for the student. These agreements will cover how the transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the child's time in foster care. *(Transportation Agreement Form appended)*

Confidentiality

Title I foster care provisions allow data sharing to improve educational outcomes for children. MPSD recognizes that child welfare agencies may share sensitive student information and commits to ensuring children in foster care are properly supported in a way that respects student privacy. In all cases, MPSD will comply with all statutory requirements to protect student privacy, including FERPA and any other privacy requirements under Federal, State, or local laws.

Appendix A

Children in Foster Care Enrollment

Records Checklist

The following records (where applicable) are requested for the 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
- ☐ Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- ☐ Withdrawal From Previous School
- ☐ Copy of Birth Certificate
- ☐ Copy of Immunization Form
- ☐ Other: _____

Children in Foster Care Enrollment
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
- ☐ Copy of Best Interest Determination Worksheet (provided after school meeting)
- ☐ Other: _____

Records Checklist for Case Worker/Foster Care Parent 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
- ☐ Copy of Best Interest Determination Worksheet (from school of origin)
- ☐ Other:

Meridian Public School District

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:

. 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:

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

_____ Yes

_____No If YES,

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 Date
Mississippi Child Protective Services

Signature Date
LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

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 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 P.O Box 771, Jackson, MS 39205

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: