



**Kosciusko School District
Foster Care Plan
2025-2026**

Foster Care

The Kosciusko School District is dedicated to providing all students with quality educational opportunities. We acknowledge that children in foster care face unique challenges, including an increased risk of grade retention, academic gaps, lower high school graduation rates, and reduced postsecondary enrollment. To address these challenges, the district is committed to ensuring greater stability for foster children, enabling them to continue their education without disruption, maintain meaningful relationships with peers and adults, and achieve college and career readiness. Educational stability is ensured through the following provisions:

- A child in foster care will remain in their school of origin unless it is determined that doing so is not in the child's best interest.
- If it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in the child's best interest, the child will be immediately enrolled in their school of residence, even if the necessary enrollment records are not readily available.

Definitions

District Point of Contact (DPC) - The individual designated by the Kosciusko School District to represent the district in matters related to the enrollment or withdrawal of foster children. The DPC communicates directly with the Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS).

School Point of Contact (SPC) - The individual designated by the building-level principal to represent the school in matters related to the enrollment or withdrawal of foster children. The SPC works directly with the DPC and ensures that all student records are obtained when a foster child enrolls in the school and that records are provided to the CPS Caseworker when a foster child withdraws.

Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS) - The CPS representative who communicates directly with the District Point of Contact and the CPS Case Worker assigned to a specific foster child's case.

Case Worker - The CPS representative assigned to manage the case of a child in foster care.

Foster Child - A child placed in the custody of Child Protective Services by a judicial authority.

Foster Parent - The parent(s) with whom a foster child is currently residing.

Enrollment of a Foster Child

In accordance with Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and Child Protective Services (CPS) guidelines, only a child's assigned Case Worker may enroll or withdraw a foster child from any school or school district. Foster parents are not authorized to withdraw a foster child from school.

Exception

As of August 2022, the Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services (MDCPS) issued an enrollment statement form. This form allows a foster parent to enroll a foster child **only** if the proper documentation is provided. A copy of the enrollment statement form is attached. (*Note: This exception applies to enrollment only.*)

Key Requirements

- The District Point of Contact (DPC) must be notified immediately when a foster child is enrolled or withdrawn.
- A Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting must be held with the CPS Case Worker upon the foster child's enrollment or withdrawal.

Communication with Foster Care Parents

- Foster care parents are not legal guardians; therefore, all official educational documents and meeting notifications will be sent directly to the student's CPS Case Worker.
- Foster care parents may not withdraw a foster child from school.

- Foster care parents are allowed to receive copies of educational records and meeting notifications **only** if proper documentation is submitted during registration.
- CPS Case Workers may invite foster care parents to meetings about the student at their discretion.

Resident Foster Children

Foster children residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled like any other student who resides within the district. The School Point of Contact (SPC) is responsible for obtaining all educational records related to the student's current enrollment. Refer to Appendix A: Records Checklist - Enrollment for further guidance. After the student's enrollment is complete, the SPC must:

- Complete the enrollment documentation.
- Place a copy of the documentation in the student's cumulative file in the SPC's office.
- Forward the original documentation to the District Point of Contact (DPC).

The DPC will retain the original documentation until the student either withdraws, graduates from the Kosciusko School District, or is no longer under the care of Child Protective Services (CPS).

Non-Resident Foster Children

Foster children residing outside the district boundaries may be enrolled if it is determined to be in the child's best interest to attend a school within the Kosciusko School District. To make this determination:

- The DPC, in collaboration with CPS, will coordinate a Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting.
- The meeting will include the SPC, Principal, CPS representative, foster parents, biological parents (if permitted), and any other relevant parties.
- This meeting must occur within three (3) business days of CPS seeking enrollment or prior to enrollment in the Kosciusko School District.

A final decision regarding the child's best interest to attend school in the Kosciusko School District will be made immediately following this meeting. Refer to Appendix C: Best Interest Determination (BID) and Appendix D: Transportation Agreement.

School of Origin

The Kosciusko School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend their school of origin if it is determined to be reasonable and in the child's best interest.

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

Child Protective Services (CPS) has the authority to withdraw students placed in their care by a judicial authority. In such cases, the School Point of Contact (SPC) is responsible for ensuring a smooth transition for the student by providing as many educational records as possible. Any records not immediately available must be forwarded to the new school within 24 hours of a request by CPS or the receiving school. Refer to Appendix B: Records Checklist - Withdrawal for required documentation. If the SPC believes it is in the child's best interest to remain at their school of origin, they must immediately notify the District Point of Contact (DPC). The DPC will then contact the Regional Director of Child Protective Services to communicate the concerns and, if necessary, arrange a discussion regarding the child's educational placement.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster parents or CPS representatives must complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Application for the Kosciusko School District. The application, along with verification of foster care status, should be submitted to the SPC. The SPC will forward these documents to the DPC, who will then submit them to the Food Service Director for processing.

Transportation

Children in foster care may require transportation to remain in their school of origin. Any child in foster care needing transportation must promptly receive these services to ensure educational stability. If a foster child moves outside the current school's attendance zone but remains in their school of origin, the Kosciusko School District (KSD) must collaborate with the Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services (MDCPS) to develop and implement clear, written transportation procedures. These procedures must ensure a system is in place to expedite transportation for foster children.

Transportation Options

KSD and MDCPS will explore various no-cost or low-cost transportation options, including:

- Arranging for MDCPS to drop the child off at a bus stop serving the school of origin.
- Allowing the foster parent or another designee to transport the child (mileage reimbursable through foster care maintenance payments).
- Reviewing pre-existing bus routes or stops near the foster placement, including those for magnet schools or homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Determining if the child is already eligible for transportation funded by other programs.
- Using foster care maintenance payments and administrative funds to cover transportation costs.
- Establishing a clear process for calculating "additional costs" of transportation and delineating KSD's responsibilities for situations with no additional costs.
- Describing how transportation will be provided when no additional costs are involved.
- Specifying the timing and procedures for MDCPS to reimburse KSD for transportation costs.

Dispute Resolution

In the event of a dispute between KSD and MDCPS regarding transportation costs, both entities must prioritize the best interest of the student. If the disagreement persists, costs will be divided equally between KSD and MDCPS. The issue will then be brought before the state-appointed Points of Contact (Toni Kersh, MDE, and Julie Propst, MDCPS). Until a decision is rendered, the current transportation arrangement will remain in effect to maintain the student's educational stability.

Appendix

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| A. Records Checklist - Enrollment | D. Transportation Agreement |
| B. Records Checklist - Withdrawal | E. Dispute Resolution |
| C. BID Questionnaire | |

Appendix A: Records Checklist - Enrollment

- 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

Appendix B: Records Checklist - Withdrawal

- 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: _____

Appendix C: Best Interest Determination (BID) Questionnaire

- 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?
- 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.
- 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?
- How is the student performing academically and behaviorally?
- What is the student's progress towards on-time graduation?
- 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
- If the student is an English learner, have the schools' ESL resources been considered? If so, explain?
- 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?
- How have the school transfers affected the student emotionally, socially, academically, and physically?
- What are the safety considerations related to school placement?
- 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?
- What are the transportation options being considered?
- How would the length of the commute to school impact the student?
- Which school is preferred (and why) by the student, birthparents, student's placement provider?

Appendix D: Transportation Agreement

Child's Name: _____

Grade: _____

MSIS ID: _____

DOB: _____

Custodial Agent/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:

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

If YES, reimbursement for some funding of transportation costs: ☐ will be pursued ☐ will NOT be pursued
for the reason below:

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

The district verifies that:

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 Signatures:

MS Child Protective Services

Date

LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

Date

Appendix E: Dispute Resolution

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 TKersh@mdek12.org with the subject "Foster Child Dispute Appeal" to Toni Kersh, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact; **OR**
- Return the paper form to Toni Kersh, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact at 359 N. West Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Student Name: _____

Name of School 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: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Approval of Foster Care Plan and Procedures

The Foster Care Plan and Procedures have been reviewed and approved by the Kosciusko School Board.

Allison Schuler, Board President

Date

Dr. Donna Boone, Superintendent

Date