CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOSTER CARE PLAN
2025-2026

EDUCATIONAL STABILITY *for* CHILDREN *in* FOSTER CARE

Canton Public School District Foster Care Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Canton Public School District (CPSD) to enroll and withdraw children that have been placed under the care of the Mississippi Division of Child Protection Services.

Goal

CPSD in collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (Madison County) ensures that children placed in foster care have stability with regards to their education.

The educational stability includes assurances that (1) a child in foster care will remain in the child's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest in that school and (2) if a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will be immediately enrolled in the school of residence, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

Definitions

District Point of Contact (DPC) – the person designated by the CPSD Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district.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designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled of withdrawn from the school.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.

Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS) - Mississippi's child welfare agency. MDCPS is given legal custody of youth placed in the foster care system.

Immediate Enrollment- when it is in a child's best interest to leave the school of origin, enrollment in a school in the local school district must take place without delay, to prevent disruption of the child's education.

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 - individual licensed by MDCPS to provide temporary care to children in foster care. MDCPS maintains legal custody of children placed in foster care.

Foster Care - Court ordered placement of a child into twenty-four-hour-out-of-home care, away from his/her parents or guardians. These placements include, but are not limited to: foster family homes, relative placements, congregate care settings, emergency shelters residential facilities and other temporary placements.

Best Interest Determination- a collaborative process, based on the individual student's unique best interests and involving input from multiple parties, that is used to make decisions about whether a student placed in foster care should continue to attend the school of origin.

School of Origin- the school that a child was attending at the time of placement in foster care or the school a child is attending at the time of any subsequent change in foster care placement.

LEA Point of Contact and Responsibilities

The superintendent will assign at least one person to serve as a Foster Care Child Liaison, or Point of Contact (POC). The name of this person will be turned in annual to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) by September 30th of each year. If additional staff members are needed to meet the requirements, the district will make assignments as deemed necessary. The Point of Contact will work in the best interest of the child to ensure that all educational requirements are

being met. The POC that is assigned to the position will have access available training and materials to keep them informed of any changes in the Foster Care Regulations. The POC will work closely with state and tribal child welfare agencies to:

- Coordinating with the corresponding child welfare agency,
- Leading the development of a process for making the best interest determination,
- Documenting the best interest determination,
- Facilitating the transfer of records and immediate enrollment,
- Facilitating data sharing with the child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA and other privacy protocols,
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures,
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes,
- Ensuring that children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attending school, and
- Providing professional development and training to school staff on the Title I provision and educational needs of children in foster care.

Decision-Making Process

A committee will meet to determine the appropriate placement of each foster care child. The committee will comprise of the site administrator or representative, the LEA's POC, and a member of the CPS. In emergency circumstances the CPS has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then consult with the LEA and revisit the best interest determination of the child. The determining factors that may be evaluated include:

- Proximity of the resource family home to the child's present school;
- Safety considerations;
- Age and grade level of the child as it relates to the other best interests' factors;
- Needs of the child, including social adjustment and well-being;
- Child's performance, continuity of education and engagement in the school the child presently attends;
- Child's special educational programming if the child is classified;
- Point of time in the year;

- Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification;
- Anticipated duration of the placement;
- Preferences of the child;
- Preferences of the child's parent(s) or educational decision maker(s)
- The child's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers;
- Placement of the child's sibling(s);
- Influence of the school climate on the child, including safety;
- Availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs;
- History of school transfers and how they have impacted the child;
- How the length of the commute would impact the child, based on the child's developmental stage;
- Whether the child is a student with a disability under the IDEA who is receiving special education and related services or a student with a disability under Section 504 who is receiving special education or related aids and services and, if so the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin; and
- Whether the child is an EL and is receiving language services, and if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the child welfare agency should be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The child welfare agency is uniquely position to assess vital non-educational factors such as safety, sibling placements, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan. They child welfare agency also has the authority, capacity, and responsibility to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties including parents, children, schools and the court in making these decisions.

Enrollment of Students

A student shall be enrolled within two (2) business days, even without normally required records, if it is determined that enrollment in a new school is in the best interest of the student. MDCPS must ensure immediate enrollment is initiated. Foster care parents, social workers or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in Canton Public School District. We understand that all necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) may not be immediately available and want to provide a smooth transition for the student into our district. Requiring emergency contact information for a student is not considered a barrier to immediate enrollment. The LEA POC will contact the home school district for the records and make adaptations as needed. After enrollment, the following guardianship or legal custody documents shall be provided for verification by the foster family or CPS:

- Power of attorney
- Affidavit
- Court Order

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

Withdrawal of a student shall only be initiated by a local MDCPS representative. 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 48 hours following a request by the school or CPS. Foster parents are prohibited from withdrawing a child in foster care.

The SPC shall contact the DPC if he/she thinks it would be in the best interest of 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.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster Care Parents, Child Protective Services, or District Point of Contact should complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Form for the CPSD. 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 Child Nutrition Director or Bookkeeper for Child Nutrition.

IDEA Students

The IDEA, Part B directs school districts must make a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) available to all eligible children with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). FAPE under IDEA includes the provision of special education and related services at no cost to the parents in accordance with a properly developed Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each child's placement decision must be made by a group of knowledgeable persons. The CPSD will operate in accordance with all state and federal laws regarding special education students. Special education services will be provided to foster care students as they are to all students following the guidelines below.

- Educational placement will be determined annually and will be based on the child's IEP in accordance with the child's individual needs
- The child will be placed in the least restrictive environment and unless they require some other arrangement they will attend the school that he/she would attend if not disabled.
- Timely and expedited evaluations and eligibility determinations for highly mobile children with disabilities will be made when possible.
- Children in foster care will have access to related aids and services that are designed to meet their educational needs.
- Children will have access to comparable services including summer and extended school year services if applicable.
- Children in foster care will not be discriminated against and are considered a protected group.

EL Students

The CPSD will ensure that EL students in foster care will participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs by doing the following:

- Identifying and assessing all potential EL students in a timely, valid and reliable manner;
- Provide EL students with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful;
- Sufficiently staff and support the language assistance programs for EL students;
- Ensure that EL students have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- Avoid unnecessary segregation of EL students;
- Ensure that EL students with disabilities are evaluated in a timely and appropriate manner for special education and disability-related services and that their language needs are considered in these evaluations and delivery of services;
- Meet the needs of EL students who opt out of language assistance programs;
- Monitor and evaluate EL students in language assistance programs following federal guidelines;
- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of school districts language assistance program and progress of each student;
- Ensure meaningful communication with the parents of the students.

Transportation

Any child in foster care needing transportation to their school of origin shall promptly receive transportation services, regardless of whether the district provides transportation otherwise. The CPSD will collaborate with the local MDCPS to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation is provided to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin but moves outside the school's attendance zone. The CPSD will also work with the CPS to reach an agreement in regards to covering the transportation costs. The agreement will cover how the transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the

duration of the child's time in foster care. Each agreement can/will vary greatly because the needs of each child should be considered in making the decision on transportation.

The regular transportation policies approved by the CPSD will be followed in transporting foster care students. Drivers will be appropriately licensed, certified, and with the required DMV and background checks. Various public school vehicles may be used to transport students depending on the circumstances. Students that must be transported out of state will be school board approved as required by Mississippi law.

Student Records

The CPSD will share education records with the CPS that are allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a Federal law that protects the privacy of children's education records. Under FERPA, schools are permitted to disclose the education records of students in foster care to a local MDCPS Specialist or MDCPS representative. FERPA defines a parent as a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting in the absence of a parent or guardian. Foster parents are considered parents and can thus access records. This allows educational agencies to disclose without parental consent educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to State and Tribal agencies. Within one (1) business day of receipt of request for school records, the school of origin shall forward, in a manner consistent with Federal and State law and in compliance with all privacy and confidentiality laws.

Appendix

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
- ☐ Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- ☐ Withdrawal From Previous School
- ☐ Copy of Birth Certificate
- ☐ Copy of Immunization Form
- ☐ 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: _____

Children in Foster Care
Best Interest Determination Worksheet

Goal: To determine if it is in the best interest for the student to remain in the school of origin.

MSIS ID: _____

Current District and School: _____

Potential New District and School: _____

Previous Schools (if known): _____

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
- ☐ Other: _____

Guidance Information:

Number of years attending the current school: _____

Current Academic Performance: _____

Number of Schools Attended in Past 5 years: _____

Number of Schools Attended this year: _____

Impact of School Transfers on Student Performance: _____

Enrollment in special programs (Gifted, Special Education, Career and Technical Programs, etc.)

_____

Effect of new school on obtaining full academic credit to be able to proceed to the next grade level: _____

Access to school-based supportive services: _____

Describe the student's relationship with the current school:

_____

Extracurricular or other activities:

_____

New living arrangement short or long term: _____

Distance and mode(s) transportation to school of origin: _____

Can change in schools if necessary coincide with end of a grading period? _____

Other factors considered:

_____

Determination of Placement:

- ☐ It is in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin.
  - A permanent transportation plan for the student should be in place within five school days of the placement, per the agreed upon transportation procedure.
  - While permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation must be provided to ensure there is no disruption in the student's education.

- ☐ It is in the best interest of the student to not remain in the school of origin.
  - The student will be immediately enrolled in the new school. The new school will request the student's record the same day from the school of origin. Enrollment means attending and actively participating in class.
  - The school of origin will send all of the student's record within one school day (e.g., cumulative record, grades, reading plan, IEP, etc.)
  - If the student is currently receiving special education services, he/she will need to continue special education services from the receiving school district.

Date: _____

Meeting Facilitator: _____

Child's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Custodial Agent Representative: _____

Custodial Agent Contact Information:

_____

_____

Meeting Participants:

Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date
Name	Signature	Date