

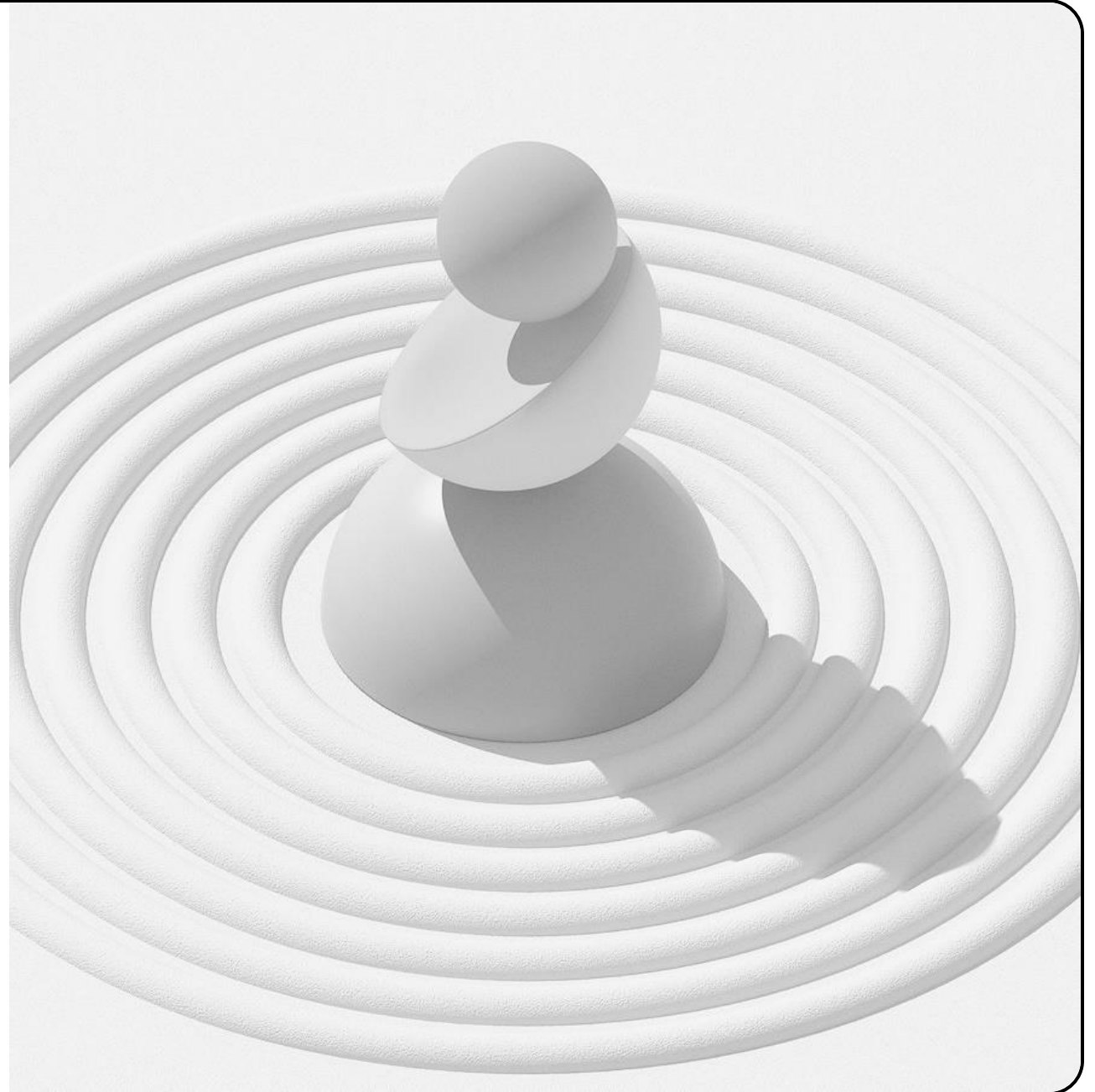
Johnson City Schools

SERVING STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE UNDER ESSA

AGENDA

- Definition of Foster Care & Statistics and Fast Facts regarding Foster Care
- School Stability for Children in Foster Care– Key Federal Laws
- Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care
- ESSA Requirements for LEAs Serving Children in Foster Care & Best Interest Determination (BID)
- Procedures and Reminders for Enrollment Staff

PLEASE NOTE: Excerpts in the presentation have been adapted and/or taken from the Tennessee Department of Education's presentations "ESSA Charting the Course: Equity and Opportunity for All—Foster Care Overview and Requirements for Transportation Procedures" By Earl Lattimore, Erin Christian, and Dan Froemel and "Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care" by Jackie Jacobson



WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

Foster Care

means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians **and** for whom the Department of Children's Services (DCS) has placement **and** care responsibility. *It does not include children who are staying with relatives or friends for a few days while DCS investigates a situation.* The Title I provision applies to all children in foster care enrolled in public schools.

Foster Care Placements

Include foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

Please note: Information in this section was taken from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth's presentation regarding the ED/HHS June 2016 Guidance on Children in Foster Care <https://naehcy.org/essa-and-children-foster-care/>



46% entry rate

From April 2023 to March 2024, Tennessee had 5,026 children enter foster care

24% re-entry rate

In 2023, 5,197 entered foster care. This was the lowest number since 2017.

7 days

In 2022, the average time between the report of the suspected maltreatment and the first face-to-face contact with the alleged victim or with another person able to provide critical information.

31% multiple placements

Of children entering foster care in 2023, 31% had been in three or more placements.

Source: The state of the Child in Tennessee 2023, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth

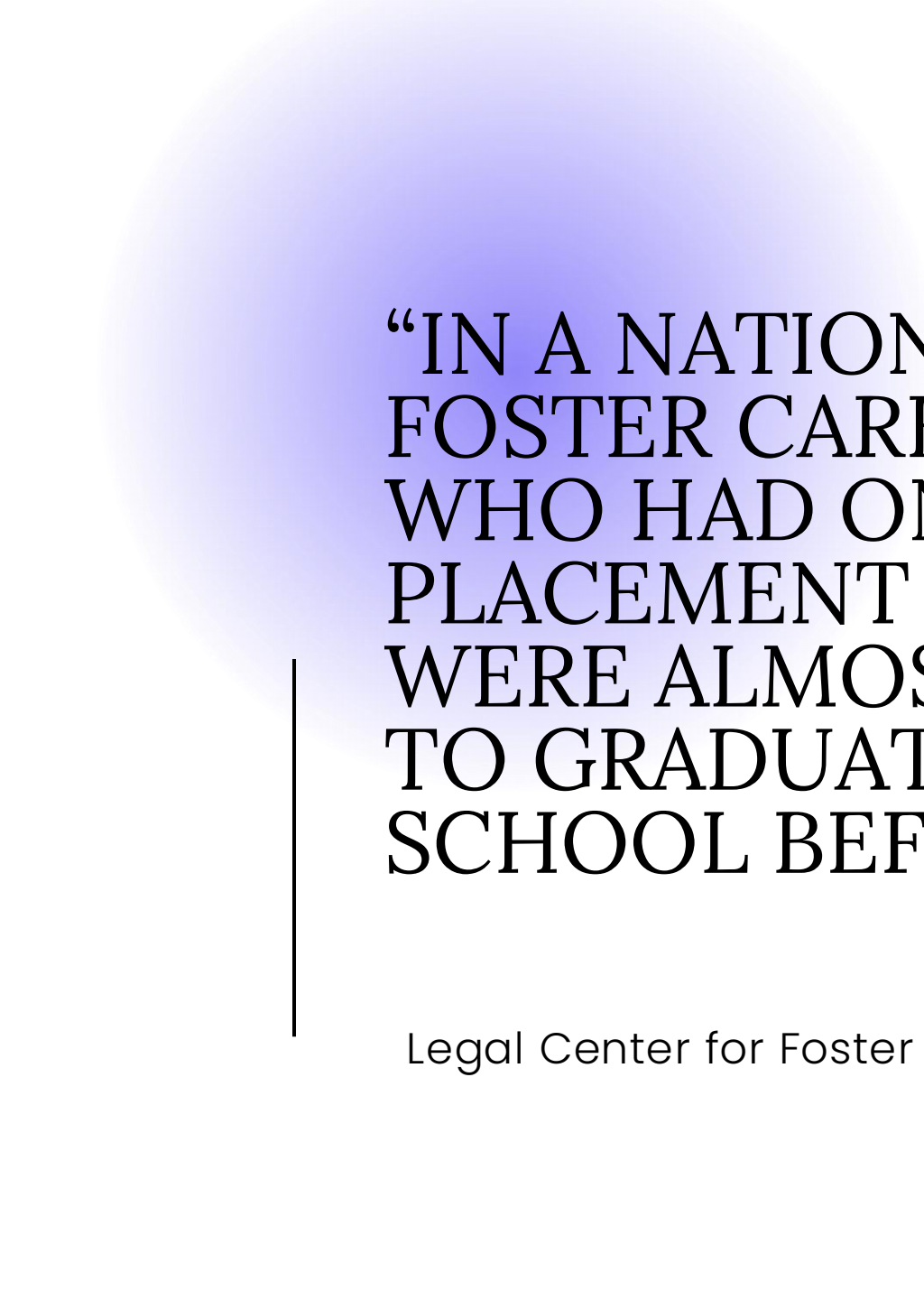
SCHOOL STABILITY

Children in foster care:

- Are a vulnerable population
- Typically make more unscheduled school changes than their peers in a given school year; and
- Compared to their peers, experience:
 - Lower high school graduation rates,
 - Lower scores on academic assessments, and
 - Higher rates of grade retention, chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and expulsions.

Required considerations:

- Appropriateness of the current education setting & proximity to the school,
- Coordination with the appropriate education agencies to ensure the child remains enrolled in school.
- If not in the best interest to remain at the school of origin, immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school and educational records are provided.



“IN A NATIONAL STUDY OF 1,087
FOSTER CARE ALUMNI, YOUTH
WHO HAD ONE FEWER
PLACEMENT CHANGE PER YEAR
WERE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY
TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH
SCHOOL BEFORE LEAVING CARE.”

Legal Center for Foster Care and Education

FEDERAL LAWS: SCHOOL STABILITY FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

LAW	YEAR ENACTED	SUMMARY
Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act	2008	Includes several education provisions in federal child welfare law. School stability is prioritized.
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	2015	Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. First law to require collaboration between education and child welfare agencies to achieve school stability.
Uninterrupted Scholars Act	2013	Amended the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to give child welfare professionals access to educational records of youth in their care, even without parental consent.

Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care

Goal #1: Remain in the same school

Goal #2: Seamless transitions between schools

Goal #3: Young children are ready to learn

Goal #4: Equal access to the school experience

Goal #5: School dropout, truancy, and disciplinary actions addressed

Goal #6: Involving and empowering youth

Goal #7: Supportive adults as advocates and decision-makers

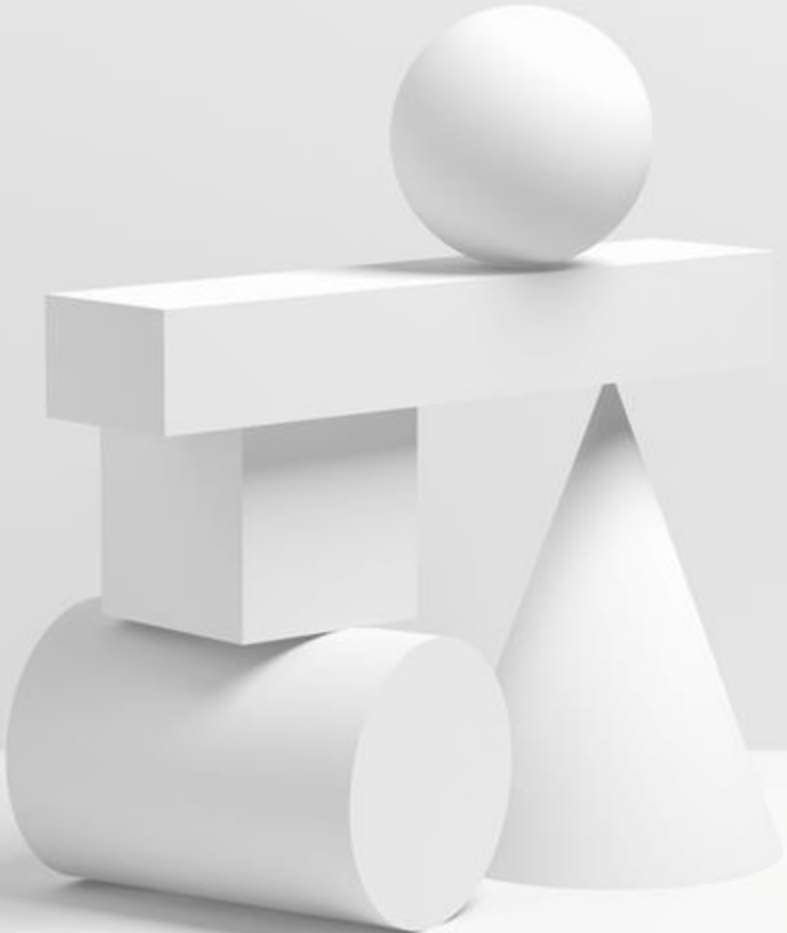
Goal #8: Obtaining postsecondary education

ESSA REQUIREMENTS

- Designated Point of Contact: each LEA should have a point of contact (POC) to coordinate services for all students in foster care including working with regional DCS offices to process and implement ESSA provisions.
- LEA Assurances:
 - Collaboration with DCS to include clear written procedures regarding transportation for children in foster care to remain in the school of origin.
 - Children in foster care remain in the school of origin unless there is a determination that it is not in his or her best interest.
 - The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other records.
 - Transportation costs cannot be a factor when determining best interest.

What is school origin?

- The school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care.
- Children can remain in the school of origin for their entire time in foster care.



BEST INTEREST DETERMINATIONS

- The BID team consists of DCS point of contact, LEA point of contact, educational decision maker, school principal or designee
- Should consider multiple student factors, including consulting the child, if appropriate
- The meeting occurs prior to withdrawal and can be virtual, teleconference, or email
- If in disagreement, the ultimate decision resides with DCS

Johnson City Schools Foster Care Procedures

1. The DCS Education Specialist or child's caseworker is responsible for notifying the LEA when a BID meeting is needed via the Education Passport.
2. A best interest determination team meeting will be scheduled within FIVE school days.
3. The LEA's Foster Care POC will contact within one day the Special Education department to determine if the student has specialized transportation.
4. Prior to the BID meeting, JC Transit or a district driver will be notified if it is determined that the student would need transportation to the school of origin. An Interagency Agreement (Transportation Procedure to Ensure Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care) may be used to assist in this decision-making process.

Johnson City Schools Foster Care Procedures Continued...

5. The DCS Foster Care POC, the LEA's Foster Care POC, the DCS caseworker, and other essential members of the BID team will share information and make a joint decision regarding the child's best placement.

Multiple Factors to be considered when determining transportation options include, but are not limited to:

1. An existing bus route can be used.
2. The DCS worker will explore options outside of those provided by the school system such as reimbursing the foster parents or including transportation in contracts with licensed child placing agencies.
3. Specialized transportation offered to other students can be accessed such as Special Education or McKinney-Vento.

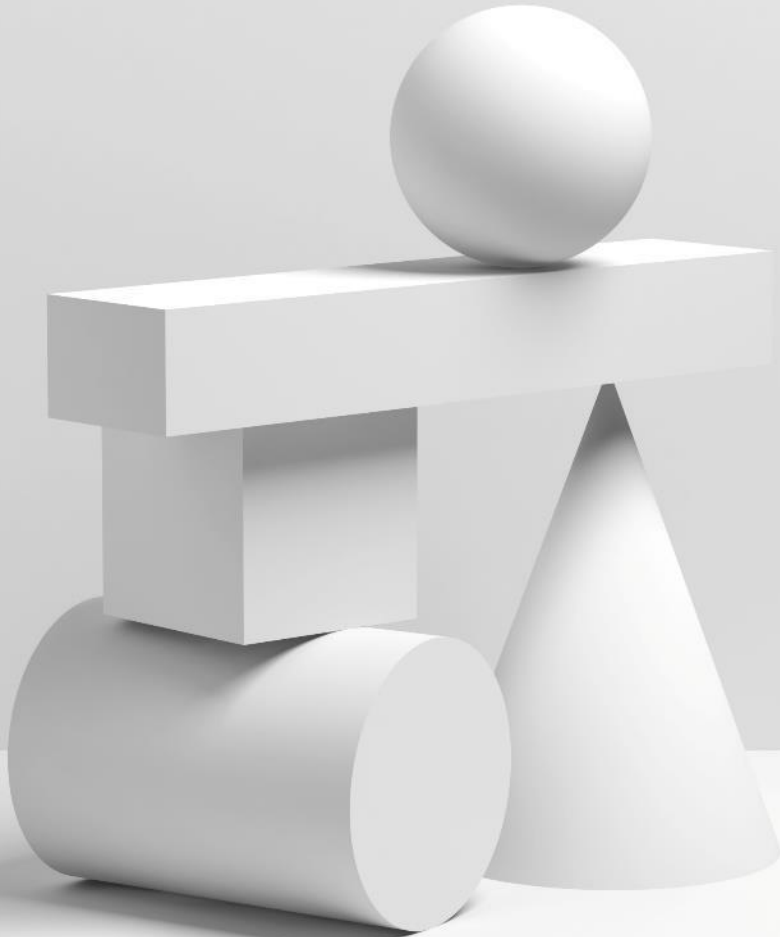
Enrollment

Staff

PLEASE NOTIFY THE DISTRICT POC WHEN A CHILD IN FOSTER CARE ENROLLS AT YOUR SCHOOL OR IF YOU RECEIVE NOTIFICATION THAT A CURRENT STUDENT HAS BEEN PLACED IN FOSTER CARE.

THE FOSTER CARE POC WILL CODE THE STUDENT CORRECTLY IN POWERSCHOOL.

STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE HAVE THE RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ENROLLMENT, EVEN IF THEY LACK ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTS.



HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- US Department of Education's Foster Care Transition Toolkit
<https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/its/ed/foster-care/youth-transition-toolkit.pdf>
- ED/HHS Joint Guidance for Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care
<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/non-regulatory-guidance-ensuring-educational-stability-and-success-students-foster-care-november-15-2024-108448.pdf>
- Legal Center for Foster Care & Education
<https://www.fostercareandeducation.org/>
- National Center for Homeless Education
<https://nche.ed.gov/foster-care/>

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT:

Johnson City Schools Foster Care Point of Contact

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