Students in Foster Care

The board recognizes that students in foster care include all students who are the subject of a dependency proceeding as defined in RCW 28A.150.510 and that these students experience mobility in and out of these care systems and from one home placement to another that disrupts their education, thereby creating barriers to academic success and on-time graduation. Through collaboration with state, local, and/or tribal child welfare agencies, the district will strive to minimize or eliminate educational barriers for students in foster care, particularly with regard to enrollment, transfer of student records, and transportation to their school of origin. Pursuant to chapter 28A.225 RCW, the district's collaboration with the state department of children, youth, and families in compliance with RCW 74.13.56 is mandatory. The superintendent or designee is authorized to establish procedures and/or practices for implementing this policy.

The District and its schools will work to improve systems to identify students in foster care to ensure that each student has proper access to free school meals and that applicable accountability and reporting requirements are satisfied.

District and Building Level Points of contact

The superintendent or designee will designate an appropriate staff member to serve as the district's foster care liaison with local child welfare agencies, if such agencies notify the district in writing that they have designated a point of contact for the district. The district foster care liaison will work with appropriate state, local, and/or tribal child welfare agencies to receive notifications and share information regarding the status and progress of students who are in foster care. The district foster care liaison will also work collaboratively with the district's Title I coordinator to provide supports for students in foster care that are enrolled or seeking to enroll in the district. The district's foster care liaison will train the building level points of contact.

Each district school, including elementary, middle, and high schools will establish a building point of contact for students who are in foster care. The principal of each district school will appoint the building point of contact for students in foster care in consultation with the district foster care liaison. The building level point of contact will be responsible for coordinating services and resources for students in foster care.

Enrollment

Students in foster care must remain enrolled in the school they were attending at the time they entered foster care or changed foster placements, unless it is determined to be in their best interest to attend the neighborhood school. Best-interest determinations should be made as quickly as possible in order to prevent educational discontinuity for the student and should take into consideration the student-centered factors and input from the relevant and appropriate persons listed in procedure 3116P.

If remaining in the school of origin is determined not to be in the student's best interest, the district will immediately enroll that student in their new school. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed based on the fact that documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided.

A school may not prevent a student in foster care from enrolling based on incomplete information of any history of placement in special education, any past, current, or pending disciplinary action, any history of violent behavior, or behavior listed in RCW 13.04.155, any unpaid fines or fees imposed by other schools, or any health conditions affecting the student's educational needs during the ten (10) day period that the Department of Children, Youth, and Families has to obtain that information. Upon enrollment, the district will make reasonable efforts to obtain and assess the child's educational history in order to meet the child's unique needs within two (2) school business days.

Records Transfer

When a student in foster care transfers schools, whether within the district or to another school district, the enrolling school will immediately contact the sending school to obtain academic and other records. The sending school will respond as soon as possible to requests it receives for records of students in foster care.

Additionally, upon receipt of a request for education records of a student in foster care from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the district will provide the records to the agency within two (2) school days.

Transportation

The district will collaborate with state, local or tribal child welfare agencies, as appropriate, to implement a written transportation procedure by which prompt, cost-effective transportation will be provided, arranged

and funded for students to remain in their school of origin when in their best interest for the duration of their time in foster care.

If the student's foster care placement changes to an area served by another school district, and it is determined to be in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin, the school district of origin and the school district in which the student is living shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the student with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the school districts are unable to agree upon an apportionment method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally between the districts.

Dispute resolution
In the event that a caregiver or education decision-maker disputes a district decision regarding the best interest of the student in foster care or the implementation of any other foster care provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, including transportation, the caregiver or education decision-maker may use the three-tiered appeals process outlined in the procedure that accompanies this policy. The district will make all reasonable efforts to collaborate with appropriate agencies and aggrieved parties to resolve the dispute at the local level.

Disputes between the district and a child welfare agency that remain unresolved may be forwarded to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for resolution.

Review of unexpected or excessive absences
A district representative or school employee will review unexpected or excessive absences of students in foster care and those awaiting placement with the student and adults involved with the student, including their caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent, guardian and foster parents. The purpose of the review is to determine the cause of the absences, taking into account: unplanned school transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, school adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and unavoidable appointments during the school day. The representative or employee will take proactive steps to support the student's school work so the student does not fall behind and to avoid suspension or expulsion based on truancy.

Facilitating on-time grade level progression
The district will: 1) waive specific courses required for graduation for students in foster care if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district; or 2) provide reasonable justification for denial of the waiver. In the event the district denies a waiver and the student would have qualified to graduate from their sending school district, the district will provide an alternative process of obtaining required coursework so that the student may graduate on time.

The district will consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and will provide students in foster care with opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.

For students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, the district will grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of the withdrawal or transfer. When the district receives a transfer student in these circumstances, it will accept the student's partial credits, apply them to the student's academic progress or graduation or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the district.

In the event a student is transferring at the beginning of or during their junior or senior year of high school and is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, the district will work with the sending district to ensure the awarding of a diploma from the sending district if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.

In the event a student enrolled in three or more school districts as a high school student, has met state requirements, has transferred to the district, but is ineligible to graduate from the district after all alternatives have been considered, the district will waive its local requirements and ensure that the student receives a diploma.

Legal References:

- RCW 28A.150.510 Transmittal of education records to department of social and health services - Disclosure of educational records - Data-sharing agreements - Comprehensive needs requirement document - Report
- RCW 28A.225.023 Youth dependent pursuant to Chapter 13.34 RCW - Review of unexpected or excessive absences - Support for youths school work

- RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences
- RCW 28A.225.330 Enrolling students from other districts - Requests for information and permanently records - Withheld transcripts-Immunity from liability - Notification to teachers and security personnel - Rules
- RCW 28A.225.350 Best interest determinations
- RCW 28A.320.148 Foster care liaison - Building point of contact
- RCW 28A.320.192 On-time grade level progression and graduation of students who are dependent youth
- RCW 74.13.550 Child placement - Policy of educational continuity
- 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]

Management Resources:

- 2022 - June June
- 2021 - June Issue
- 2018 - May Policy Issue
- 2017 - July Issue
- 2016 - November Issue
- OSPI list of Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts

Cross References:

- 2418 - Waiver of High School Graduation Credits
- 3115 - Students Experiencing Homelessness - Enrollment Rights and Services
- 3120 - Enrollment
- 3122 - Excused and Unexcused Absences
- 3231 - Student Records
- 6100 - Revenues From Local, State and Federal Sources

Adoption Date: **09.2026**
Classification: **Important**
Revised Dates: