JBCB – FOSTER CARE STUDENT REGULATIONS

Foster Care Student Regulations

To Aid in Implementation of Federal Law

NOTE: This document MUST be approved by board action to become policy. File with clerk, distribute to principals, and duplicate as necessary in district newsletters and other documents.

The Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA") addresses additional protections for students in foster care and establishes a system of joint responsibility for school districts, the Kansas State Department of Education ("KSDE"), and the Kansas Department for Children and Families ("DCF") to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care.

For the purposes of these regulations, "foster care" means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents and for whom a child welfare agency has placement and care duties. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child-care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

Transportation of Students in Foster Care (See sample transportation procedure below)

ESSA requires each Kansas school district to collaborate with child welfare agencies, such as DCF and tribal child welfare agencies, to develop and implement clear, written procedures for how transportation to maintain a student in foster care in his or her school of origin (when in the student's best interest) will be provided, arranged, and funded. The procedures must ensure that the transportation will be provided promptly, in a cost-effective manner, and in accordance with federal law. Also, they must address how additional costs will be absorbed. Therefore, if there are any additional costs incurred to maintain a foster care student in his or her school of origin, the district will provide the transportation if:

1. DCF agrees to reimburse the district for the additional costs;
2. The district agrees to pay the additional costs; or
3. DCF and the district split the additional costs.

Upon request, the district will provide an assurance to KSDE that the district has transportation procedures meeting the above requirements.

Additional Costs

"Additional costs" reflect the difference between what the district would spend to transport a student to the assigned school and the cost of transporting a student in foster care to his or her school of origin. Title I, Part A funds may be used to pay for additional transportation costs in Title I districts.

School of Origin

The "school of origin" is the school in which a student is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care or of a change in placement. A student in foster care is entitled to remain enrolled in his or her school of origin unless it is determined not to be in the student's best interest to stay at that school.

Best-Interest Determination

DCF will make the final decision regarding whether it is in a student's best interest to remain in the school of origin. District staff may be asked to provide information on the "educational best interest" of the student to support educational decision-making based on what is best for the student academically. For students receiving special education and related services under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act or for students on Section 504 accommodation plans, it is recommended that relevant team members

should be consulted in the best interest determination process, as the district will still be required to ensure compliance with Least Restrictive Environment requirements.

The United States Department of Education has provided a list of factors that may be considered in determining the student's educational best interest, which include appropriateness of the current setting, proximity of placement to school attendance centers, the child's preference, the parents' preference, the child's attachment to the school of origin, where siblings will be placed, and the availability of needed services. The "best-interest determination" may not be made based on transportation costs or funding.

District Foster Care Liaison

The "district foster care liaison" is a district employee who facilitates the enrollment in or transfer to a public school of a student in the district who is a ward of the state. The district's foster care liaison is considered the designated point of contact for collaboration with DCF on transportation procedures.

The District has designated the following staff person as the District foster care liaison:

Name:
Position:
E-mail:
Address:
Telephone:

Child Welfare Agency

In Kansas, DCF is the regular child welfare agency for collaboration on transportation procedures. The Child Protective Services ("CPS") division of DCF will typically be the division that works with the district on issues related to students in foster care, however, tribal child welfare agencies may also be involved with this process. Therefore, whenever DCF is used in these regulations, it may be deemed to apply to any child welfare agency based on the circumstances.

Child Welfare Contact

The district, if receiving Title I, Part A funds, must collaborate on transportation procedures with the DCF-designated contact if DCF notifies the district in writing that DCF has designated an employee to serve as a point of contact for the district.

Approved:

KASB Recommended Regulations – 12/16; 5/26

General Transportation Procedures

To ensure that transportation is provided promptly when it is determined to be in the best interest of a student in foster care to remain in the school of origin, the district has developed the following transportation procedures. These procedures will guide the development of an individual transportation plan for a student needing transportation to his or her school of origin.

If the secretary of DCF changes the placement of a child from one school district to another school district or across a school boundary within the same district, and determines that it is in the best interests of the child to remain enrolled in and attending the school of origin, the affected school district and the secretary shall coordinate to develop a transportation plan to get the child to and from such school of origin.

Such plan shall address the availability and cost of such transportation, including how such costs shall be reimbursed by the secretary, paid by the school district, or shared between both parties. When developing such transportation plan, consideration shall be given to the:

(A) Age, maturity and behavioral capacity of the child;
(B) type of transportation available;
(C) flexibility in the school schedule;
(D) the effect of extracurricular activities on transportation options;
(E) traffic routes and patterns; and
(F) individualized needs of the child.

Funding Strategies

The district and DCF have identified the following funding options that may be implemented if additional costs to transport a student in foster care to the school of origin are determined:
(Adjust the items below to include those agreed upon by the district and DCF. Consider any cost-sharing strategies that the district has used successfully with neighboring districts in transporting students who are homeless to and from their school of origin or any other programs where transportation costs are shared.)

1. Cost sharing between the district and DCF through use of a specific transportation strategy in which each party is responsible for a segment of the transportation;
2. Offset of costs by DCF, such as using Title IV-E funds paid to a foster parent or caregiver for transportation;
3. Cost sharing between the school district of attendance and the school district where the student is living;
4. Use of the district's Title I funds;
5. Use of Medicaid reimbursements if the IEP for a student receiving special education services will include transportation as a related service;
6. Use of any available grant funds; and
7. [Other].

Transportation Strategies

The following transportation strategies may be considered in achieving transportation to a student's school of origin:

(Adjust the items below to include those agreed upon by the district and DCF. Consider any strategies that have been used successfully to transport students who are homeless to and from their school of origin and effective practices currently used to share transportation costs with neighboring districts, community partners, or others.)

1. Arranging transportation by the foster parent or caregiver to the school of origin or to a bus stop on a route to the school of origin, such as when the foster parent lives within a certain distance from the school of origin;
2. Arranging transportation by a relative or another adult approved by DCF with whom the student has a relationship and whose existing commute aligns with the student's transportation need to the school of origin or a bus stop on a route to the school of origin;
3. Maximizing the existing district transportation system by exploring ways the student can be transported to an existing bus stop that serves the school of origin (options to transport the student to an existing bus stop could occur through use of public transportation with a bus pass or transportation voucher, or transportation by the foster parent or caregiver, a relative, or another adult with whom the student has a relationship);
4. Using existing intradistrict transportation options that allow students to be transported within the district, such as routes for students who are homeless, students attending magnet programs, or students receiving special education services (this option may require the addition of a bus stop on an existing route or that an existing route be rerouted to accommodate the transportation needs);
5. Coordinating with the district in which the student is living to provide transportation to the district boundaries or an existing bus stop within the district;
6. Evaluating whether an IEP for a student receiving special education services will include transportation to the student's special education program at the school of origin as a related service;
7. Contracting with a private transportation company, such as a taxi service, for the student's transportation needs;
8. Using public transportation with a bus pass or transportation voucher;
9. Adding a district transportation route; or
10. [Other].

Individual Transportation Plan

When DCF determines that the best interest of a student in foster care is to remain in the school of origin, the district foster care liaison will take steps to promptly collaborate with relevant DCF staff on how transportation to the school of origin will be provided, arranged, and funded.

When possible, and to allow for adequate consideration of the student's needs, individual transportation planning will begin in advance of placement changes and will occur in coordination with the consultation on the student's educational best interest.

The district foster care liaison will convene a meeting to establish an individualized transportation plan for the student. The liaison will attempt to include the student's DCF education decision-maker and others who may be involved in education decision-making for the student, such as the student's caseworker, foster parent or caregiver, and the court-appointed special advocate (CASA) liaison. The District foster care liaison may also involve other district staff, as appropriate. The liaison will involve the district transportation director if the individual transportation plan will involve adjustments to existing bus routes.

If necessary, the district foster care liaison will identify a short-term transportation strategy that may be used until the final transportation plan is completed so that the student can remain at the school of origin without interruption.

In evaluating transportation options to the school of origin, participants will prioritize student safety, cost effectiveness, reliability, and time and distance of the commute.

Determining Additional Costs

To identify whether additional costs will be incurred in an individual transportation plan to transport the student to the school of origin, the foster care liaison will consult with the district transportation director to calculate the cost of transporting the student to the school that the student would otherwise attend, which will be used as a comparison. In accordance with the federal Non-Regulatory Guidance, if the district is able to provide transportation through an established bus route, there are no additional costs. If the district will reroute buses or provide transportation through a private vehicle or transportation company, the district may consider as additional costs the cost of rerouting buses or the difference between the special transportation costs and the usual transportation costs.

Administrative costs, such as additional staff time to coordinate transportation, will also be considered in determining whether there are additional costs to transport the student in foster care to the school of origin.

Plan Elements

The individual transportation plan may include:

1. A daily transportation strategy;
2. One or more backup transportation strategies;
3. Transportation strategies to allow participation in after-school and extracurricular activities;
4. A description of the funding strategy that will be used if additional costs to transport the student to the school of origin are identified;
5. Identification of who is responsible for each aspect of the transportation strategy;
6. Designation of an adult to accompany younger students, if necessary, such as when public transportation is used;
7. For transportation strategies with multiple segments, sign off procedures to ensure that the student safely and successfully completes each segment;
8. A communication protocol between the District and DCF when transportation for a student is no longer needed; and
9. A regular review process for adjusting transportation strategies when circumstances change.

The final individual transportation plan will require a signature by the foster care liaison and a district official who has authority to approve any additional expenditure. The DCF education decision-maker and the foster parent or caregiver, if different from the education decision-maker, will also be asked to sign the plan.

Approved:

KASB Procedures – 12/16; 6/26