

Every Student Succeeds Act Foster Care Provisions

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) emphasizes the educational stability of vulnerable students, including those in foster care. ESSA requires new guidelines and resources to ensure improved educational outcomes for children in foster care. These provisions take effect on Dec. 10, 2016.

OHIO'S CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM:

Ohio's county children services agencies are dedicated to ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being for abused, neglected and dependent children. Like education, child protection in Ohio is administered locally and supervised by the state. In the case of child protection, the work is carried out by county children services boards or by county job and family services offices. Children in foster care face many educational barriers, including traumatization, high mobility, and undiagnosed behavioral and health conditions.

LOCAL POINT OF CONTACT

Districts must designate and make public in an expedited manner, if contacted in writing by the local child protection agency, a local point of contact and the state point of contact for the child protection agency. The designated local point of contact should have sufficient capacity and the necessary resources to fulfill the duties to serve as the liaison. The contact should coordinate with child protection agencies, lead the development of a process for making the best determination for a student, facilitate the transfer of records, and ensure that foster students are enrolled and regularly attending school.

DID YOU KNOW:

14,000 children are in foster care in Ohio on any given day.

50 percent of students in the foster care system do not graduate from high school.

1 in 3 students in foster care repeat a grade.

IDENTIFICATION

Districts will need to identify which students in their districts are in foster care and coordinate with child protection agencies to establish formal mechanisms to ensure that they are promptly notified when a child enters foster care or changes foster care placement. The district and the child protection agency should share information concerning the foster child. Foster care means "24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility." This can include placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions and pre-adoptive homes.

ENROLLMENT

A district must ensure that the child is immediately enrolled in his or her new school to prevent any discontinuity in education, regardless of whether the student has the required documentation.

TRANSFER OF RECORDS

If a foster student enrolls in a new school district, the school that the student enrolls in must contact the student's prior school and obtain his or her relevant records, this includes facilitating the transfer of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) expeditiously. Districts should review and revise policies and practices to remove any barriers to immediate records transfers for children in foster care.

TRANSPORTATION

If a child remains in his or her school of origin during the time he or she is in foster care, the district has to develop and implement a plan to transport the child in foster care from the current home to the school of origin.