

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
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**Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act:
Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care**

Table of Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. Federal and State Statutory Requirements	2
III. Interagency Collaboration	4
IV. Overview of Sequence and Timeframe	5
V. Details for School Placement Process	7
VI. Subsequent Actions for a School of Origin Determination	15
VII. Subsequent Actions for a School of Residency Determination	17
VIII. Resolving School Placement Disputes	19
References	21
Glossary	22
FC/ESSA Form A-17, Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services and Request for Best Interest Determination Participation Form	Appendix A
FC/ESSA Form B-17, Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form	Appendix B
FC/ESSA Form C-17, Immediate Enrollment of Student in Foster Care Form	Appendix C
FC/ESSA Form D-17, Best Interest Determination Process Educational Input from Residential Treatment Centers Form	Appendix D
Job Descriptions	Appendix E
Acknowledgements	Appendix F

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

I. Introduction

Children and youth in foster care are among the most vulnerable populations in this country. Children and youth in out-of-home care average one to two residential placement changes per year, a rate of mobility greater than their peers not in foster care. According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System data in 2014, approximately 415,000 children were in foster care and nearly 270,000 were in elementary and secondary schools. Children in foster care experience much higher levels of residential and school instability than their peers. In one study¹, 75 percent of children in foster care made an unscheduled school change in one school year, compared to less than 40 percent for children not in foster care. Furthermore, those students in foster care at age 17 were less likely to graduate from high school; with only 65 percent graduating by age 21 compared to 86 percent among all youth ages 18 to 24.

Of the more than 5,000 children and youth in foster care in Virginia, approximately 80 percent are school-aged (ages 4-17). Statistics show that close to 64 percent of youth in care experience two or more foster home placements throughout the duration of one foster care episode, indicating the vital need to provide stability for these youth wherever possible. Stability can be promoted by maintaining a predictable and familiar school environment, when in the youth's best interest, where the youth is known, cared for, and supported.

For children and youth in foster care, a change in *home* placement frequently results in a change in *school* placement. The educational impact of every school change is significant. Each time students enter new schools they must adjust to different curricula, different expectations, new friends, and new teachers. Keeping children in the same school:

- provides continuity in education;
- maintains important relationships at school;
- provides stability during a traumatic time for the children; and
- improves educational and life outcomes.

This joint guidance document represents collaboration between the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) to implement the provisions of the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* (Fostering Connections) and the Title I, Part A provisions in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) to ensure school stability for students in foster care. This guidance applies to initial and subsequent residence placements while children are in foster care.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics (2014). *Digest of education statistics*, 2014 104.40.
Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_104.40.asp?current=yes

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

The guidance applies to all children and youth in foster care who attend preschool programs administered by local school divisions or the Virginia Department of Education and public K-12 education programs that are administered by local education agency² (LEA) or state education agency (SEA) regardless of whether they enter foster care through:

- court commitments (e.g., abuse, neglect);
- voluntary entrustment agreements when the parents request the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) to assume custody of the children temporarily or permanently; or
- voluntary noncustodial agreements with the parents to place the children in foster care while the parents retain legal custody and LDSS assumes placement, care and case management responsibilities.

II. Federal and State Statutory Requirements

A. The federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* (Fostering Connections) (P.L. 110-351, Section 204) requires child welfare agencies to provide:

(i) assurances that the placement of the child in foster care takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; and

(ii)(I) an assurance that the State agency has coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies (as defined under section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; or (II) if remaining in such school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances by the State agency and the local educational agencies to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the educational records of the child provided to the school.

B. The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA) (P.L. 114-95) provides a parallel mandate for state and local departments of education to provide educational stability for youth in foster care.

ESSA reauthorizes and amends the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* and includes new foster care provisions that complement requirements in the Fostering

² Virginia refers to LEAs as school divisions.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Connections Act and emphasize shared agency responsibility and decision making. All education stability provisions had to be implemented by December 10, 2016. These provisions are under Title I, Part A and include:

- Local Title I plans must contain an assurance that the LEA will collaborate with the state or local child welfare agency to:
 - Designate a point of contact if the corresponding child welfare agencies notifies the LEA, in writing, that it has designated a point of contact for the LEA.
 - Within one year of enactment, develop and implement procedures for how transportation to maintain foster youth in their schools of origin, when in their best interest, will be provided, arranged and funded, which must:
 - Ensure that youth in foster care who need transportation to the school of origin promptly receive it in a cost-effective manner, and in accordance with the child welfare agency's authority to use child welfare funding available under section 475(4)(A) of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to provide transportation.
 - Ensure that if there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, LEAs will provide it if:
 - they are reimbursed by the child welfare agency;
 - the LEA agrees to pay the costs; or
 - the LEA and the child welfare agency agree to share the costs.
- Beginning with the 2017-18 school year, achievement and adjusted cohort graduation rates must be disaggregated for students in foster care and reported in School Quality Profiles.

C. The *Code of Virginia* reinforces Fostering Connections and ESSA for educational stability.

Section 22.1-3.4(B) states:

The sending and receiving school divisions shall cooperate in facilitating the enrollment of any child placed in foster care across jurisdictional lines for the purpose of enhancing continuity of instruction. The child shall be allowed to continue to attend the school in which he was enrolled prior to the most recent foster care placement, upon the joint determination of the placing social services agency and the local school division that such attendance is in the best interest of the child.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Section 22.1-3.4(D) states:

"Receiving school division" means the school division in which the residence of the student's foster care placement is located. "Sending school division" means the school division in which the student last attended school.

Section 63.2-900.3 of the *Code*, as amended by the 2012 General Assembly, states:

When placing a child of school age in a foster care placement, as defined in § 63.2-100, the local social services agency making such placement shall, in writing, determine jointly with the local school division whether it is in the child's best interests to remain enrolled at the school in which he was enrolled prior to the most recent foster care placement, pursuant to § 22.1-3.4.

III. Interagency Collaboration

Fostering Connections and ESSA recognize that the school setting is often the most stable environment for students in foster care. To the extent feasible and appropriate, a student must remain in his or her school of origin to reduce the number of school moves. Fostering Connections clearly outlines child welfare agencies' responsibilities for students in foster care. Fostering Connections requires child welfare agencies to develop a foster care service plan that includes an emphasis on school stability. ESSA requires that school personnel have a major role in supporting educational stability that is in each student's best interest.

LDSS and school divisions must work together to jointly determine school placement that is in the best interest of each child in foster care when a residence changes. Every school division has designated a foster care liaison to serve as a resource in facilitating the best interest determination in his or her community. LDSS have designated educational stability liaisons to ensure educational stability policies and procedures are followed. Job descriptions for these liaisons can be found in Appendix E.

When making the decision about an appropriate residence for a child in foster care, LDSS case workers are required by Fostering Connections to consider the appropriateness of the student's current educational setting and the distance from the new residence to the school in which the student is currently enrolled. When the LDSS case worker determines the most appropriate residence for the child, federal and state law require the LDSS case worker and the appropriate foster care liaison work together to jointly determine the student's best interest for school placement. The main objective of this coordination is to ensure educational stability for children in foster care, including students with disabilities served under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)* or the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, as amended. The presumption is that the student will remain in the school where he or she is currently enrolled, unless contrary to the student's best interest.

**Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act:
Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care**

IV. Overview of Sequence and Timeframe

The School Placement Process Flowchart on page 6 provides a visual summary of the process described below:

1. Residence Determination: The LDSS case worker determines the most appropriate residence for the child.
2. School Placement Determination: The School Division foster care liaison and the LDSS case worker jointly determine the student's best interest for school placement.
3. Subsequent Actions: The LDSS or the school division provides transportation to remain in current school or immediately enrolls the student in the new school of residence.

See flowchart on next page

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

School Placement Process for Students in Foster Care

A student in foster care needs an initial or change in residence.

- The LDSS case worker notifies the current school that the student needs an initial or change in residence.
- The school provides the LDSS case worker with information regarding the appropriateness of the student's current educational setting.
- The LDSS case worker determines most appropriate residence for student, taking into account information provided by school and proximity to the current school.
- LDSS case worker makes the residence placement and, within 72 hours, notifies the foster care liaison(s) of student's new residence and need for joint determination of student's best interest for school placement and notifies the LDSS educational stability liaison.
- Complete FC/ESSA Form A-17.

The LDSS case worker collects information from the student, parents, and other possible BID members using communication options in Guidance.

The foster care liaison shares information with the school of origin (SOO) transportation designee to identify options according to the local Title I Plan.

The SOO transportation designee provides the foster care liaison with possible transportation options.

The foster care liaison collects information from appropriate school and division staff, including an IEP team representative if the student has an IEP.

Taking into account input from all members, the LDSS case worker and foster care liaison jointly determine if the student's best interest is to remain in current school.
Complete FC/ESSA Form B-17 2017.

No

LDSS case worker notifies school division and school of child's new residence of need to enroll student.

As quickly as possible. Within 3 work days of residence change.

Yes

Student remains in current school.

LDSS case worker, foster parent or LCPA presents child for immediate enrollment in school of residence with required information and certifications.
Present completed FC/ESSA Form C -17.

No later than beginning of the next school day

School of residence immediately enrolls student.

The school division explores options to support SOO transportation and notifies the LDSS case worker.

If the school division does not have any options or cannot provide complete coverage, LDSS arranges and pays for transportation for the child using Title IV-E funds or requesting CSA funds.

When "specialized" transportation is indicated in child's IEP, the school division responsible for FAPE arranges and pays for transportation.

Sending school expedites transfer of school records to receiving school. (within 5 days)

Within 30 days

LDSS case worker provides receiving school any missing required documentation.

Note: Some steps may occur concurrently.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

V. Details for School Placement Process

A. Residence Determination

The LDSS case worker convenes a Family Partnership Meeting before moving the child or youth to a new residence. The purpose of the meeting is to engage the child or youth, family, and community members, as appropriate, in determining the most appropriate residence to help achieve safety, a permanent family, and lifelong connections for the child or youth. The LDSS case worker and the school where the student is currently enrolled must work together to help inform this decision-making process. The school must provide information about the appropriateness of the student's current educational setting. The LDSS case worker must consider this information, the distance from potential placements to the student's current school, and other critical factors in making the placement decision. The foster care liaison may be asked to attend the Family Partnership Meeting (or a portion of the meeting), or the school may provide this information through an alternative method.

Best Practice

When a change in placement is being considered, the LDSS case worker should e-mail the school principal/designee and copy the foster care liaison and the educational stability liaison to obtain early information that will expedite a best interest determination. Information to request includes:

- grades
- attendance
- any special supports the student receives at school
- discipline record

B. Best Interest Determination (BID) Process

There should be no gaps in providing an education to students in foster care, and students should remain enrolled in the school of origin while the BID process is completed. Students should not be withdrawn from their current school during the decision making process.

No BID is required when:

- the new residence is zoned for the current school,
- the student enters a Level C licensed residential placement, or
- a student returns from a residential placement or detention to the SAME foster care placement.
- the distance between the school of origin and the new foster care placement is greater than 100 miles.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

For general education students and students with disabilities, the LDSS case worker and appropriate foster care liaison must work together to determine the student's best interest for school placement and ensure educational stability for the student. *The presumption is that the student will remain in the current school where he/she was last enrolled, unless contrary to the student's best interest.* The LDSS case worker and foster care liaison, in collaboration with the student and other key partners, make a determination as to whether the student should:

- remain in the school where the student was enrolled at the time of placement in the new residence, considering the appropriateness of the educational setting; or
- change schools and enroll in the school of residence for the child's or youth's new residence placement, if remaining in the current school is not in the student's best interest. The student must be enrolled immediately and appropriately with all educational records provided to the new school. It is recommended that the records be received within five days of enrollment.

When placing the child or youth in the new residence, the LDSS case worker is required by state law to document in writing the joint determination with the appropriate school division of whether it is in the student's best interest to remain enrolled in the current school (see § 63.2-900.3 of the *Code of Virginia*).

The joint determination for school placement (BID) should not delay the child's or youth's placement in the new residence. If the joint determination process cannot be completed prior to the placement in the new residence (e.g., an emergency placement to ensure the child's or youth's safety), ***the presumption is that the student will remain enrolled in the current school, until the best interest determination process can be completed.***

The LDSS case worker notifies the appropriate school division foster care liaison of the child's or youth's new residence using the [Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services and Request for Best Interest Determination Participation Form](#) (FC/ESSA Form A-17 in Appendix A). Contact information for school and school division personnel can be found at: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/directories/index.shtml>.

A link to school division foster care liaisons and educational stability liaisons can be found in the References section under Contact Information.

Best Practice

When the new residence is located in a different school division, it is best practice to notify the foster care liaisons in both divisions using FC/ESSA Form A-17.

This notice should trigger flagging (or verify an existing flag) in the school division's student record collection system that the student is in foster care.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

As quickly as possible (e.g., within three (3) work days), the Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form (FC/ESSA Form B-17 in Appendix B) should be used to ensure critical factors are discussed in deciding where the student should be enrolled.

This can be done with a face-to-face meeting, a conference call or other electronic meeting platform. All participants do not need to meet at the same time. Information can be collected via e-mail to ensure the timeline is met. The LDSS case worker is responsible for completing the form and making sure the appropriate participants have had input. The LDSS case worker and foster care liaison have joint responsibility for expediting and completing the process.

1. For general education students:

- The LDSS case worker must contact the student's current school division foster care liaison to convene the best interest determination meeting. A Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services and Request for Best Interest Determination Participation Form (FC/ESSA Form A) should be used to document the change of residence and need for a BID.
- The foster care liaison notifies the school of origin transportation designee of the new address to trigger a review of transportation options to and from school that may be available through the school division, following the assurances found in the local Title I, Part A plan.
- As a best practice, the foster care liaison representing the school division for the child's or youth's new residence (if placement crosses school division lines) should be invited. While not the decision-maker, this participation can inform what educational and transportation options are available for the student or expedite a transition, if needed. [Note: If the receiving school division was not invited to participate and the decision is made to change the student's school placement, the receiving school division may dispute the best interest decision.]
- The LDSS case worker and the school division foster care liaison where the student is currently enrolled must coordinate to determine jointly the student's best interest for school placement, in consultation with the student, parents, and other key partners.
- The student should remain in the current school, unless contrary to the student's best interests.

Remember:

Students should not be withdrawn from school until the BID process has been completed.

2. For students with disabilities served under IDEA:

For students receiving special education, the responsibility for placement determination and the mechanism for making the determination are driven not only by Fostering Connections and ESSA, but also by the state and federal regulations under IDEA. Thus, in determining which

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

school division to involve in the best interest determination, the school division and LDSS must determine which school division is responsible under IDEA for the student's free appropriate public education (FAPE), and a representative from the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team must participate in the decision.

2a. For the student with a disability served under IDEA whose new residence is in the *current* school division:

When a special education student's new residence is in the current school division but not zoned for the current school, the LDSS case worker must contact the student's current school division foster care liaison to begin the best interest determination process (using FC/ESSA Form A-17). The student should remain in the current school unless contrary to the student's best interest. If a change in school placement is being considered, a representative who can speak to the student's needs and services found in the IEP must participate in the determination. The foster care liaison and LDSS case worker, after considering input from all parties, make the BID decision, emphasizing stability and least restrictive environment (LRE), within three work days. The LDSS case worker is responsible for completing the Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form (FC/ESSA Form B-17). If the conclusion of the BID process is that no change in school is needed, no IEP meeting is necessary and the current IEP remains in effect. If a change in schools is determined to be in the student's best interest, the receiving school adopts the current IEP unless there is a change in program.

2b. For the student with a disability served under IDEA whose new residence is in a *different* school division:

In cases where the student's new residence is in a different school division, state regulations governing special education provide that **the school division where the student's new residence is located is responsible for FAPE**. Representatives from the sending and receiving school divisions who can speak to the student's needs and services found in the IEP must participate in the BID. The LDSS case worker must contact the school division foster care liaison where the student is currently enrolled, *and* the school division foster care liaison for the student's new residence, to begin the best interest determination process (using the Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services Form, FC/ESSA Form A-17). The student should remain in the current school unless contrary to the student's best interest. The foster care liaison for the new residence and LDSS case worker, after considering input from all parties, make the BID decision, emphasizing stability and least restrictive environment, within three work days. The LDSS case worker is responsible for completing the Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form (FC/ESSA Form B-17).

- The foster care liaison in the school division of the student's new residence and the LDSS case worker are the BID decision makers.
 - If the decision supports remaining in the school of origin, consistent with Virginia Special Education Regulation 8 VAC 20-81-30 C8 & 9, the school division of the

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

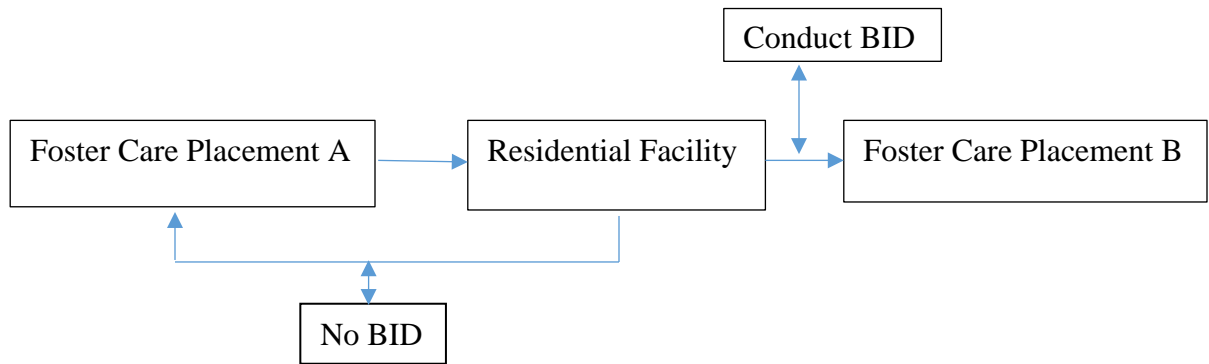
student's new residence is responsible for FAPE and must adopt the IEP until it completes a transfer IEP even though the student will not physically be attending school in the receiving school division. If there are questions regarding which school division is responsible for FAPE, the Virginia Department of Education Office of Student Services should be contacted.

- If the BID supports a transfer to the receiving school, the receiving school immediately enrolls and provides educational services comparable to the current IEP until a transfer IEP is completed within 30 days.
 - If the IEP team in the division where the student's new residence is located determines that the student needs to be placed in a private day or residential facility for educational reasons, the responsibility for FAPE shifts to the school division served by the LDSS that has responsibility for the care of the student.

3. Special Cases

- For students who were in foster care at the time of commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice or who have been in detention for more than 30 days, the Procedures for the Re-enrollment of Youth Released From the Custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice and Returned to Public Schools ([Re-enrollment Process](#)) must be followed. A BID should be completed concurrently. The school of origin is the last school attended prior to commitment.
- If the student is in detention for less than 30 days and returns to the same foster care placement, no BID is required. If the student has a new foster care placement that is not in the same school zone and is less than 100 miles from the school of origin, the BID process described above should be followed.
- When a student is discharged from a residential facility to a different foster care placement, the LDSS case worker must notify the school division where LDSS has custody and the local school division of residency for the new foster care placement of the need to conduct a BID (FC/ESSA Form A-17).
- If the student is leaving a residential placement and returns to the same foster care placement where the student resided prior to the residential facility, no BID is required and the student should enroll in the last school attended prior to the residential placement. If the student has a new foster care placement, the BID process described above should be followed.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care



NOTE: Residential placements are *not* considered schools of origin or receiving schools. While staff in these placements has important information about the student, the LDSS case worker and the school division foster care liaison are the decision makers. See Form FC/ESSA D-17 in Appendix D.

Best Practice

When changes in placement occur over the summer, the student's last school is still the school of origin and the BID process should be followed at the time the residence changes. Delaying the process until it is almost time for school to begin can cause significant delays and backlog of cases to be reviewed by school division staff. Foster care liaisons are encouraged to have designees appointed to address requests for BIDs received during the summer that may occur when the liaison is unavailable.

C. Factors to Assess in Determining Student's Best Interest for School Placement

According to federal and state law, the child's or youth's safety and permanency plan must be paramount in decision making. Additional factors relevant to school stability when determining the student's best interest for school placement include, but are not limited to:

- preferences of the student and birth parents;
- permanency goals and plan;
- personal safety, attendance, academic progress, and social involvement of the student in the current school;
- student's participation in any specialized instruction;
- the impact transferring the student to a new school may have on the student's needs and progress academically, emotionally, socially, and physically;
- time in the school year;
- distance from the student's current school to the new placement; and
- solutions addressing any practical issues identified, such as travel to the student's current school from the new residence.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

The Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form (FC/ESSA Form B-17) should be used to assist the LDSS case worker and the foster care liaison in jointly determining the student's best interest for school placement. This form provides a series of questions that documents the determination process and compliance with federal and state law.

The LDSS case worker is required to document the best interest determination in the child's or youth's case file, including factors considered, participants involved in the collaborative process, the team's determination process for school placement, and the placement decision. Documentation of the best interest determination is maintained in both the LDSS case file for the child or youth and the student's cumulative school record.

Best Practice

If a change in school placement is determined to be in the student's best interest, the Immediate Enrollment of Student in Foster Care Form (FC/ESSA Form C-17 in Appendix C) should be completed and the BID should be attached to the enrollment form for the receiving school.

D. Engaging Key Partners in Determining Student's Best Interest for School Placement

The LDSS case worker should make all reasonable efforts to involve other individuals who have knowledge of the child or youth to participate in the BID. Best practice would be to conduct a BID meeting but information can be shared through conversations, e-mails, and faxes prior to the school and the LDSS case worker making the "joint" school placement decision.

Essential members of the team determination process include:

- the child or youth;
- the child's or youth's birth parent(s);
- an IEP team representative, if needed;
- the LDSS case worker; and
- the foster care liaison.

These essential members should be invited to provide information that will assist in making an appropriate decision for the student. Given the short timeframe for completing the BID, the LDSS case worker should document invitations and whether or not the member was able to participate.

The LDSS case worker should engage the child or youth in discussions to:

- solicit the child's or youth's wishes related to school placement;
- address constructively any concerns the child or youth may have related to school placement;

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

- discuss the benefits of having someone participate to help ensure the child’s or youth’s wishes are communicated; and
- ask who the child or youth would like to participate. The LDSS case worker should arrange for this person’s participation.

To share the workload, the foster care liaison and LDSS case worker may want to involve or consult the following people during the best interest determination, as appropriate.

The foster care liaison may consult:

- the foster care liaison from the school of residence for the student’s new residence or current school division, as applicable
- classroom teachers
- school social workers
- school counselors
- special education and related service personnel, as appropriate
- transportation designee
- coaches

The LDSS case worker may consult:

- other family members
- foster parents
- current placement provider, and other service providers (e.g., treatment foster care, group home, residential)
- guardian ad litem
- court-appointed special advocate (CASA)
- other adults who are significant to the child or youth and family

While an actual meeting to conduct a BID is best practice, there is recognition that the expedited timeline may limit opportunities to do so. The best interest determination is a process which can occur through conversations and phone calls prior to the foster care liaison and LDSS case worker making the final decision. Participation in the BID process may occur through phone calls, teleconferences, e-mails, written documentation, or other electronic means to increase participation.

Best Practice
To avoid delays, consider training multiple staff who can be a designee for the foster care or educational stability liaison when the liaison is not available.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

E. Revisiting a BID

In addition to the required BID, the process can be used to revisit a determination when concerns arise or during natural breaks such as the transition to a new academic year. The LDSS case worker and foster care liaison acting as the decision maker should agree to initiate the process. Furthermore, a BID may include a temporary decision that will be revisited. The agreed upon timeline to review the decision can be included in the initial BID.

VI. Subsequent Actions for a School of Origin Determination

If the student will remain in the current school, the LDSS is responsible for coordinating transportation to and from the school, unless the student has an IEP with specialized transportation. ESSA requires school divisions to provide assurances that they will collaborate with state and local child welfare agencies to develop and implement clear written procedures for how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the time the student is in foster care. Procedures must ensure that students will promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner by exploring low-cost/no-cost options. School divisions must provide assurances that they will collaborate with LDSS to transport students in foster care following the process outlined in the local Title I, Part A plan.

A. Payment for Regular School Transportation

The process for payment is the same for general education students and students with disabilities who use regular school transportation. When the transportation designee has identified options, the school division will collaborate with the LDSS to arrange the transportation according to the Title I, Part A plan (which may include LDSS reimbursement for excess cost). When the school division does not have options for transportation the school division can provide, the LDSS must arrange for transportation and payment of transportation expenses for the student to remain in the current school. Reasonable costs shall be paid:

- using Title IV-E for eligible children and youth, consistent with federal and state law/policies; or
- requesting state pool funds through the Children’s Services Act (CSA)³ for non-Title IV-E eligible children and youth, consistent with state law.

³ CSA means the *Children’s Services Act for At-Risk Youth and Families* that establishes the collaborative administration and funding system for services for certain at-risk youths and their families. §2.2-5200 et seq., *Code of Virginia*.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

The LDSS considers a wide range of options for providing transportation by providers who ensure the child's or youth's safety and well-being. Providers must have a valid driver's license and automobile insurance. The student must be properly secured in a child restraint device consistent with state law.

Payment for reasonable costs must be made to specific providers to transport an eligible child or youth. Individual providers reimbursed at the state mileage rate must submit to the LDSS proof of actual miles driven. Types of providers and reasonable costs may include the following:

- foster parents reimbursed at the state mileage rate;
- friends, relatives and neighbors of the student or foster parent reimbursed at the state mileage rate;
- employees of child placing agencies and residential programs reimbursed at the state mileage rate;
- public transportation paid at the established rate; and
- local school bus with reimbursement made to the local school division's school bus transportation fund (There must be a written and signed agreement/contract between the LDSS and the local school division or the company that manages the school bus system. This document shall be placed in the child's or youth's file at the LDSS.).

B. Payment for "Specialized" Transportation Indicated in a Student's IEP

When a youth entering or in foster care has an IEP that requires "specialized" transportation to the current school, such transportation costs are paid for by the school division responsible for FAPE (as noted previously). Neither Title IV-E funds nor CSA funds can be used for services outlined in an IEP. "Specialized" transportation includes individualized provisions, noted in the IEP, that are needed because of the student's disability and that are necessary to guarantee access to FAPE. Examples include the following. A student requires:

- transportation to an alternative public school. It is recommended that this be written explicitly in the IEP. Even if it is not specifically indicated in the IEP, the school division responsible for FAPE is responsible for the transportation;
- transportation to a private school program (i.e., private day or private residential school). It is recommended that this be written explicitly in the IEP. Even if it is not specifically indicated in the IEP, the school division responsible for FAPE is responsible for the transportation;
- physical accommodations/modifications (e.g., car seat or security devices such as harnesses, brackets, restraints, seatbelts, vests, etc.);
- specialized equipment such as special or adapted bus, lift, or ramp;
- a bus with a two-way radio, phone, or other equipment, in case of emergency;
- specialized services including personnel to provide assistance or supervision (e.g., aide);
- necessary medical equipment to perform procedures on the bus;

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

- modification of a school or bus schedule (e.g., partial day attendance, shortened bus ride, etc.).

VII. Subsequent Actions for a School of Residency Determination

If the LDSS and school division jointly determine that remaining in the current school is not in the student's best interest, § 63.2-900.D of the *Code of Virginia* specifies that:

Within 72 hours of placing a child of school age in a foster care placement, as defined in § 63.2-100, the local social services agency making such placement shall, in writing, (i) notify the principal of the school in which the student is to be enrolled and the superintendent of the relevant school division or his designee of such placement, and (ii) inform the principal of the status of the parental rights.

This notification can be accomplished with the Immediate Enrollment of Student in Foster Care Form (FC/ESSA Form C-17). The BID should be completed prior to this notification unless one of the conditions that does not require a BID is met.

A. Immediate Enrollment in Student's New School of Residence

Delays in continuous enrollment in school are not in the best interest of the student, and both federal and state laws prohibit delaying the student's ongoing education. The LDSS case worker should submit the Immediate Enrollment of Student in Foster Care Form (FC/ESSA Form C-17) to the school which provides all required information for school enrollment. The LDSS case worker should print the form on yellow paper to alert the school and distinguish it from other documents.

Best Practice

To ensure a smooth transition, the completed BID should be attached to the Immediate Enrollment of Student in Foster Care Form (FC/ESSA C-17) for the receiving school. Having both school division foster care liaisons included during the BID process should assist in a smooth transition when immediate enrollment is needed.

The form documents the minimum legal requirements for immediately enrolling the student. The LDSS case worker provides a written statement with the student's name and address, and to the best of the person's knowledge: the student's age, required certifications, and that the student is in good health and is free from communicable or contagious disease (§ 22.1-3.4 of the *Code of Virginia*).

Upon presentment of the form or the minimum legal requirements, the new school must immediately enroll the student no later than the beginning of the next school day. If, despite all reasonable efforts, school officials are unable to enroll the student by the beginning of the next

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

school day following presentment for enrollment, the student shall be enrolled no later than the second school day following presentment. In such instances, school officials should document reasons for the delay and attach this information to the Immediate Enrollment Form.

Important Enrollment Definitions

“Immediate” means no later than the beginning of the next school day after the presentment for enrollment.

“Presentment” means the person enrolling the student has appeared at the school and presented all required information and certifications (§ 22.1-3.4 of the *Code of Virginia*). This can be the adult student, the LDSS case worker, foster parent, birth parent, Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) designee, or group home designee.

“Enrollment” means the student is attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

B. Ensure Transfer of Additional Documentation

The sending and receiving school divisions must expedite the transfer of the student’s record in accordance with § 22.1-289(E) of the *Code of Virginia* and the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia*, as applicable.

If the documents required by the school to enroll the student are not immediately available when the LDSS assumes custody or changes placement of the child or youth, the LDSS case worker must obtain and produce, or otherwise ensure compliance, with these requirements within thirty (30) days after enrollment of the student [§ 63.2-900(D) of the *Code of Virginia*].

These documents include the student’s:

- birth certificate (§ 22.1-3.1.A of the *Code of Virginia*);
- proof of immunization (§ 22.1-271.2 of the *Code of Virginia*); and
- preschool physical examination (§ 22.1-270 of the *Code of Virginia*).

For students with disabilities, the school division responsible for the student’s IEP and FAPE must ensure that the student receives FAPE even if the required enrollment documents are not immediately available [8 VAC 20-81-30(D)]. Additionally, the school division must also ensure that any related IEP requirements are followed, including as necessary, the requirements of Prior Written Notice, and notices of IEP meetings.

The school retains the Immediate Enrollment of Student in Foster Care Form (FC/ESSA C-17) in the student’s cumulative record and ensures that the foster care flag is activated in the school division student record collection system. The LDSS must retain a copy of the form for the child’s or youth’s

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

file, with copies provided to the birth parents, prior custodians, and/or the foster, adoptive or resource parent(s), as appropriate.

VIII. Resolving School Placement Disputes

It is the responsibility of the LDSS and the school division to collaborate in determining the student's best interest for school placement and to resolve any conflict concerning the school placement decision. Any BID decision can be disputed by:

- the LDSS that has custody of the child; or
- the school division acting as the decision maker in the BID process.

If educational stability is disrupted or the BID was required and not conducted, the following parties may dispute the educational placement:

- the student;
- parents of the student, unless educational rights have been terminated;
- the school division that is not the BID decision maker if the foster care placement crosses school division boundaries.

When a BID is challenged, the procedure delineated below should be followed to resolve school placement disputes.

1. During the resolution process, the student *remains* in the school in which he or she was enrolled at the time of placement in the new residence.
2. Transportation to the school of origin must be provided during the dispute process as described in Section VI of this joint guidance document.
3. Within five work days of the best interest determination decision, a dispute may be initiated by any of the parties noted above. A written request to challenge the BID must be submitted to the BID decision-making school division superintendent (or designee) and the LDSS director (or designee, such as the educational stability liaison) to review the best interest determination documentation.
4. Within ten work days following the submission of a written request, the superintendent and director (or designee) review the Best Interest Determination for Foster Care School Placement Form (FC/ESSA Form B-17) which documents 1) the factors that were considered in determining the school placement that is in the student's best interest; 2) the team's determination for school placement; 3) the participants involved; 4) whether each participant agreed or disagreed with the team's determination; and 5) the reasons for agreement or disagreement. The superintendent and director (or designees) also review

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

any additional information pertinent to the dispute and efforts made to resolve the dispute. They work together to resolve the dispute.

5. If the LDSS director (or designee) and the school division superintendent (or designee) reach consensus regarding the student's best interest for school placement, the LDSS case worker and the foster care liaison are informed of the decision and should implement the appropriate next steps to ensure the student's school placement.
6. If the two parties cannot agree, they should seek guidance and consultation from their respective state agencies. This request is submitted within the same ten-day timeframe. The LDSS submits this request to the Virginia Department of Social Services, Foster Care Unit, while also ensuring that the appropriate Regional Foster Care Consultant has been made aware of the case. Local school divisions submit their requests to the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Student Services.
7. After the Virginia Departments of Education and Social Services work together to provide guidance and technical assistance to the involved local agencies, the school division superintendent (or designee) and LDSS director (or designee), in consultation with the team, make the decision for placement.
8. All written documentation is placed in the student's case file and the student's cumulative record to be available for any required federal reviews.

Note: This dispute process is intended to address school stability and school placement. For students with disabilities, the determination regarding the ability of a student to receive FAPE is the exclusive decision of the student's IEP team. Such a determination may only be challenged through the established dispute resolution mechanisms of special education law – i.e., mediation, a state complaint, or due process hearing. The IEP team determination, or the determination reached through the special education dispute resolution process is final.

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

References

- **Federal law requiring educational stability for children and youth in foster care**
 - *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* [20 USC 6301]
 - *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* [42 USC 1305]
 - Social Security Act, Title IV, § 475 (1) (G) [42 USC 675]
 - Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), [20 USC 1221]
- **Virginia Regulations and Guidance**
 - Virginia Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/regulations/state/regs_speced_disability_va.pdf
 - Virginia Department of Education Superintendent's Memos
 - No. 272-16, dated October 28, 2016
 - Virginia Department of Social Services Finance Guidelines for Local Departments of Social Services Manual, Section 4.25, LASER Budget Line and Cost Code Descriptions, 811

Contact Information

VDOE: Office of Student Services: (804) 225-2071
Project HOPE-Virginia: (757) 221-4002

VDSS: Division of Family Services: (804) 726-7944 or (804) 726-7423

Local Liaisons:

School Division Foster Care Liaisons, see contact information at:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/foster_care_students/index.shtml

Educational Stability Liaisons, see contact information at:

<https://dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/>

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Glossary

504 Plan – Falling under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, this plan can help students with learning and attention issues participate in the general education curriculum

AFCARS – Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System – collects case-level information from state and tribal title IV-E agencies on all children in foster care and those who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement

BID – Best Interest Determination; also referred to as the *joint determination for school placement*

CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocate – community volunteer trained to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children

CSA – *Children’s Services Act for At-Risk Children and Families* – establishes the collaborative administration and funding system for services for certain at-risk youth and their families

CWA – Child welfare agency – also referred to as *local department of social services* (LDSS)

DJJ – Department of Juvenile Justice – the Virginia DJJ serves court-involved youth throughout the state

Educational Stability Liaison – also called *child welfare point of contact* in federal guidance, this is the LDSS designee for ensuring school stability for children and youth in foster care

English Learners (ELs) – students identified as having limited English proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, or writing English through procedures established by school districts

Enrollment – child is attending classes and participating fully in school activities

ESEA – *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* – provided national education law and commitment to equal opportunity for all students

ESSA – *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* – reauthorizes ESEA and builds upon certain key areas of ESEA to ensure student success

Family Partnership Meeting – structured decision making process to engage family members and key players prior to making a significant change, including a change in placement for a child in foster care

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education, an educational right of children with disabilities

Foster Care Liaison – also called *educational point of contact* in federal guidance, this is the school division designee for ensuring school stability for children in foster care

Fostering Connections – the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*

GAL – Guardian ad litem – an individual appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child

IDEA – *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* – national law amending the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and ensuring services to children and youth with disabilities

IEP – Individualized Education Program – a written education plan designed to meet the placement and services needs of students with disabilities who need special education

Immediate enrollment – enrollment of a student no later than the beginning of the next school day after presentment

Joint determination for school placement – also referred to as the *Best Interest Determination (BID)*

LEA – Local Education Agency, also referred to as *school division*

Level C residential facility – residential, in-patient care with 24-7 therapeutic treatment of severe mental, emotional and behavioral disorders

LRE – Least Restrictive Environment – for educational purposes, ensures that students with disabilities are educated in integrated settings, alongside students with and without disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate

LDSS – Local Department of Social Services, also referred to as *child welfare agency*

Presentment – the person enrolling the child in school has appeared at the school and presented all required information and certifications

Prior Written Notice – written notice that an LEA provides to parents regarding any proposed changes to an IEP, required in certain circumstances

Private day and residential schools – licensed, privately operated schools providing specialized educational services for students with disabilities

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Receiving school division – public school division in which the student’s new or proposed foster care placement is located

Re-enrollment process – procedures for re-enrolling youth released from the custody of DJJ and returned to public schools, as provided in joint guidance authored by VDSS and DJJ

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – authorized grants to States for vocational rehabilitative services, emphasizing services for those with severe disabilities

Residence determination – LDSS determines the most appropriate placement for a child

School division – also referred to as the *local education agency* (LEA)

School placement decision – school division and LDSS jointly determine the child’s best interest for school placement

School attendance zone – school a youth would attend based on domicile or residence

School of origin – the school in which a student is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. If a student's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the student is enrolled at the time of placement change.

Sending school division – division in which the student last attended public school; also called *school of origin* (SOO)

SEA – State Education Agency, also referred to as the *Virginia Department of Education*

SOO – school of origin – see definition above

Specialized transportation – transportation indicated in an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

TFC – Treatment Foster Care – out of home placement provided by specially trained foster parents for children and youth who may have a high level of needs

Title I – Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies

Title IV-E – part of the Social Security Act that provides a funding stream for foster care costs, requiring specific eligibility criteria

Fostering Connections and the Every Student Succeeds Act: Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Transfer IEP – when a child with an IEP changes schools or school divisions, the IEP in place will be transferred from school of origin to the new school placement. The IEP team will meet within thirty days of change in placement to review the plan and, if needed, update accordingly.

Transportation designee – person responsible for coordinating student transportation within a school division

VDSS – Virginia Department of Social Services, also called the *state child welfare agency* in federal guidance

VDOE – Virginia Department of Education, also called the *state education agency (SEA)* in federal guidance

Date of Notice:		<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Care Liaison for Division of School of Origin (notification, request for records, and participation)		<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Care Liaison for School Division of New Residency (notification and request for participation)	
School of Origin Information					
School Division/School:					
Superintendent:		E-mail:		Phone:	
Principal:		E-mail:		Phone:	
Foster Care Liaison:		E-mail:		Phone:	
School Division of New Residency Information					
School Division:					
Superintendent:		E-mail:		Phone:	
Foster Care Liaison:		E-mail:		Phone:	
Student Information					
Student Name:		DOB:	Age:	Grade:	
504 Plan: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		Special Education (IEP): <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
Student's New Placement Information					
Type of Placement:			Date of Placement:		
Address:			Phone:		
Contact:			E-mail:		
Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA):			Phone:		
Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) Agency Information					
Custodial Department of Social Services:			Removal Date:		
LDSS Case Worker:		Phone:	E-mail:		
LDSS Educational Stability Liaison:			E-mail:		
Parent Information					
Are parental rights terminated (TPR)? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If yes, move to next section)					
Mother's Name:			E-mail:		
Address:			Phone:		
Father's Name:			E-mail:		
Address:			Phone:		
Best Interest Determination (BID) Information					
<input type="checkbox"/> NO BID is needed. The student's new placement is: . Please notify transportation of address change. <input type="checkbox"/> YES, BID is needed. The student's new placement is outside of the school of origin's geographic zone; therefore, a BID is necessary to address educational stability. <input type="checkbox"/> Please provide your availability (at least 3 dates/times) via e-mail to the LDSS Case Worker within 2 business days of the date of this notice. <input type="checkbox"/> A BID meeting for this student has been scheduled on / , at and you, or a designee, are invited to attend. If attendance in person is not possible, participation via phone is most welcomed. Please call to participate in the meeting telephonically. If you are a school of origin, information regarding the student's current academic placement, including grades/transcript, attendance, discipline, and IEP/504 is requested to inform the BID decision making process. If the student is a special education student, a representative who is knowledgeable of the student's educational needs is requested to participate. **Additionally, you (or your designee) will be asked to provide information regarding transportation options which may be available.					

General Instructions:

Whenever a student enters foster care or has a change in placement, please be sure to complete all sections as thoroughly as possible. Field information can be entered by clicking in the area enclosed in parentheses which will yield a text, calendar, or drop-down field.

Section Specific Instructions:

Although most sections of this document are self-explanatory, below is some section-specific guidance which may assist in the form's completion.

Date of Notice Information:

In this section, select the date that the form is being sent to the school division and which school division the form is going to. BEST PRACTICE: If across school division lines, notification should be sent to the foster care liaisons in BOTH school divisions.

The School of Origin is the school that the youth is currently attending when entering foster care or experiencing a placement change.

School of Origin/School Division Information:

Most school divisions have a "school finder" feature on their website which will locate a school building for an address. The Virginia Department of Education maintains a listing of Virginia Public School Division information by region at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/directories/schools/school_info_by_regions.shtml. By selecting the school division link, you can find information such as the name and contact information for the superintendent and local school building administration. A listing of school division Foster Care Liaisons, with contact information, can be found at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/foster_care_students/fostering_connection_liaisons.pdf

Student Information:

Please be sure to indicate if a child has a 504 plan or an IEP. This information is important and impacts the BID process.

Student's New Placement Information:

Along with the type, address, and date of the placement, please be sure to provide a contact name with phone number in this section. If the placement is a foster home, this would be the foster parent and their direct contact information. If the placement is a group home placement, the "contact" should be the person who will be attending the BID meeting. This is not a treatment foster care case manager; that information would be placed on the line below entitled Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA).

Agency Information:

This section is where the Local Department of Social Services contact information is entered.

Parent Information:

This is where information on the **Biological Parents** is entered. If there is a termination of parental rights (TPR), move to the next section. If there is NOT a TPR, please complete this section with the most accurate information available. Unless there is a TPR, biological parents retain their educational rights, and therefore, should be considered active participants of this process as well as all other educational processes, such as 504 plans and IEP meetings.

Best Interest Determination (BID) Information:

If the new residence is zoned for the current school; the distance between the school of origin and receiving school is greater than 100 miles; the placement is a Level C residential treatment facility; or the student is returning from a residential treatment facility or detention to the same foster care placement, then there is no need for a BID meeting to take place and the "NO" box should be checked. In such cases, this form serves as notification of the move so that school databases can be amended to reflect the new address and contact information.

If one of the criteria above is not met, a BID meeting to address educational stability is necessary and the "YES" box should be checked.

- If a meeting has not been scheduled and school division staff availability is being requested, select the first check box.
- If a meeting has already been scheduled, please include the time, date, and location of the meeting as well as a phone number to allow for participation via phone.

NOTE: Documents should be password protected prior to sending electronically. Instructions on password protecting a word document can be found at <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Password-protect-a-document-8f4afc43-62f9-4a3a-bbe1-45477d99fa68>. You will need to share the document password telephonically or in a separate email.

APPENDIX B: BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOR FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT FORM

BID Rationale

§ 63.2-900.3. School placement of children in foster care.

When placing a child of school age in a foster care placement, as defined in § 63.2-100, the local social services agency making such placement shall, in writing, determine jointly with the local school division whether it is in the child's best interests to remain enrolled at the school in which he was enrolled prior to the most recent foster care placement, pursuant to § 22.1-3.4.

Note: The BID process is not required in the following circumstances: the new residence is zoned for the current school; the distance between the school of origin and receiving school is greater than 100 miles; the placement is a Level C residential treatment facility; or the student is returning from a residential treatment facility or detention to the same foster care placement.

Student Information

Student Name:	Grade:	Date of BID:
Division/School of Origin:		

Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) Information

LDSS Agency:	Case Worker:	Phone:
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Determination

The student shall remain in the division/school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement (**school of origin**).

Name of School Division/School:

Based on the best interest determination, a change in school placement is necessary. The student will be enrolled in the division/school of current residence (**receiving school**).

Name of School Division/School:

NOTE: If a change in educational placement is necessary, enrollment in the new school should take place **immediately** using the **Immediate Enrollment of a Child in Foster Care Form**. All educational records should be provided to the receiving school.

BID Participants

Title	Invited	Participated	Printed Name	Signature	Agree With Determination
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Birth Parent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
LDSS Case Worker or Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guardian Ad Litem	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
School of Origin Representative	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Receiving School Representative (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
IEP Team Member (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
IEP Team Member (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Foster Parent:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

APPENDIX B: BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOR FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT FORM

Factors for Team Consideration in the BID

****What is the student's permanency goal and plan?**

****What is the expected date for achieving the permanency goal?**

****How many schools has the student attended, including natural transitions (elementary, middle, high)?**

****How many schools has the student attended this year?**

****How many hospitalizations has the student had within the last year?**

****Does the student have a 504 Plan? Yes No**

****Does the student have an IEP? Yes No**

****If the student has an IEP, is specialized transportation identified as a related service? Yes No**

****What is the student's attendance record for this school year?**

**** How many of the following does the student have this school year?**

Absences _____ Tardies _____

****Do the student's siblings attend the current school? Yes No**

The wishes of the student (student voice):

The wishes of the parent(s) (family voice):

The wishes of other team members:

All information gained through the BID "meeting" process (documented on the following pages)

****Information can be completed by the LDSS Case Worker prior to a BID process meeting.**

BID Meeting Questions

1. Describe all participants' views of the student's ties to his or her current school, including significant relationships/interactions, and involvement in extracurricular activities? (Include student/family voice as well as professional input.) Discuss family members, friends, and ties to school staff.
2. What are the student's academic/career goals? Does one school have programs and activities that address the unique needs or interests of the student that the other school does not have?
3. How is the student performing academically and behaviorally? What is the student's progress towards on-time graduation?
4. **Does the student participate in other specialized instruction or services (e.g., special education or 504 accommodations, gifted program, career and technical program, therapeutic day treatment)?
5. If the student is an English learner, have the schools' ESL resources been considered? If so, explain?
6. Would changing schools affect the student's ability to earn full academic credit, participate in sports or other extra-curricular activities, proceed to the next grade, or graduate on time? If so, how?
7. How have the school transfers affected the student emotionally, socially, academically, and physically?
8. What are the safety considerations related to school placement?
9. Would the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture, such as after testing, after an event that is significant to the child, or at the end of the school year?
10. What are the transportation options being considered? How would the length of the commute to school impact the student?
11. Which school is preferred (and why) by:
 - the student
 - the birth parents
 - student's current placement provider

APPENDIX B: BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOR FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT FORM

Supporting Documentation

Indicate and attach any supporting documentation which was used in making this determination of best interest. (The following is checklist of sample documents that may be considered. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.)

- Report cards
- Progress reports
- Achievement data (test scores)
- Attendance data
- IEP or 504 Plan
- E-mails or correspondence from individuals consulted
- Disciplinary referrals
- Health reports/records

IMMEDIATE ENROLLMENT OF STUDENT IN FOSTER CARE FORM

Date Student Presented for Enrollment:		Date of Enrollment: (Recorded by School)	
Best Interest Determination (BID) Process Information			
BID Completion Date: (Documentation must be attached)			
Student Information			
**Student Name:		DOB:	**Age:
Gender:			
Current Grade:	504 Plan: (if yes, attach)	Special Education (IEP): (if yes, attach)	
Student's New Placement Information			
Type of Placement:		Date of Placement:	
**Address:		Phone:	
Contact:		Email:	
Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA):		Phone:	
Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) Agency Information			
Custodial Department of Social Services:		Removal Date:	
LDSS Case Worker:		Phone:	
LDSS Educational Stability Liaison:		Phone:	
School/Division of Origin Information (last school attended)			
School Division/School:		School Phone:	
Foster Care Liaison:	Email:	Phone:	
Parent Information			
Are parental rights terminated (TPR)? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If yes, move to next section)			
Mother's Name:		Email:	
Address:		Phone:	
Father's Name:		Email:	
Address:		Phone:	

The local department of social services (LDSS) shall coordinate with the school division representative to ensure that the child in foster care is immediately and appropriately enrolled with all educational records provided to the new school ([Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 \(P.L. 110-351\)](#); [Social Security Act, Title IV, § 475 \(1\) \(G\) \[42 USC 675\]](#)); [Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 \(P.L. 114-95\)](#). The sending and receiving school divisions shall expedite the transfer of the student's record (§ [22.1-289](#) of the Code of Virginia).

This document provides all information required for the LDSS to notify the school principal and school division superintendent and for the school to immediately enroll the child in compliance with §§ [63.2-900.D](#) and [22.1-3.4](#) of the Code of Virginia. The three asterisked (***) areas meet these minimal requirements of enrollment. All other information helps to ensure a smooth transition for the child and school.

"Immediate" means no later than the beginning of the next school day after the presentation for enrollment. **Presentment** means the person enrolling the child has appeared at the school and presented all required information and certifications. **"Enrollment"** means the child is attending classes and participating fully in school activities. If, despite all reasonable efforts, school officials are unable to enroll the child by the beginning of the next school day following presentment for enrollment, the student shall be enrolled no later than the second school day following presentment.

If enrollment is delayed until the second school day after presentment, school officials shall document reasons for the delay and attach these reasons to this form.

(Please complete page 2)

(Print on yellow paper for easy identification)

IMMEDIATE ENROLLMENT OF STUDENT IN FOSTER CARE FORM

****Enrollment Certifications**

I am a representative of the agency to whom the court has committed or the parent has entrusted the child's care through a voluntary entrustment or noncustodial agreement of the above-named child. This child meets the definition of a child placed in foster care in § [22.1-3.4](#) of the Code of Virginia; therefore, I am certifying that the child is eligible for *immediate* enrollment.

To the best of my knowledge, **has** **has not** been expelled from school attendance at a private or public school division of the Commonwealth of Virginia, or in any other state, for an offense in violation of the school board policies relating to weapons, alcohol or drugs, or for the willful infliction of injury to another person.

To the best of my knowledge, **has** **has not** been found guilty of or adjudicated delinquent of any offense listed in § [16.1-260.G](#) of the Code of Virginia or any substantially similar offense under the laws of any other state, the District of Columbia, or the United States or its territories.

To the best of my knowledge, is in good health and is free from communicable or contagious disease. If documentation of a physical exam, birth certificate, social security number, and/or immunization record is unavailable at the time of enrollment, they must be provided to the school within 30 days of enrollment.

LDSS Case Worker Signature

Date

Release of Information

I, , as legal custodian/guardian of , hereby authorize schools, their agents and employees in possession of this student's educational records to release such information as necessary for the purposes of his/her educational enrollment at .

Legal Custodian/Guardian Signature

Date

Direct Questions To:

VDOE: Office of Student Services: (804) 225-2071

VDSS: Division of Family Services: (804) 726-7944 or (804) 726-7423

Student Information			
Student Name:	DOB:	Age:	Grade:
504 Plan: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Special Education (IEP): <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Date of Admission:	Date of Discharge:		
Residential Treatment Center Information			
Name of Facility:			
Address:		Phone:	
Educational Contact:		Email:	
Educational Case Manager:		Email:	
Academic Update			
Academic Strengths:			
Academic Challenges:			
Successful Academic Strategies:			
Academic Summary:			
Behavioral Update			
Behavioral Strengths:			
Behavioral Challenges:			
Successful Behavioral Strategies:			
Behavioral Summary:			
Supporting Documentation			
Indicate and attach any supporting documentation that you wish to share. (The following is a checklist of sample documents that may be considered. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Report Card/Transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance Data <input type="checkbox"/> IEP or 504 Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Disciplinary Referrals <input type="checkbox"/> Discharge Summary			

APPENDIX E:

School Division Foster Care Liaison

Job Description

Purpose:

Collaboration between school divisions and local departments of social services (LDSS) is recognized as an important component of working to improve educational outcomes for youth in care. The federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* and the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* of 2015 encourage coordination between education agencies and departments of social services.

Knowledge Base:

Liaison must be versed in current laws, regulations, policies, and guidance governing education services for youth in foster care, such as the *Fostering Connections Act*, *ESSA*, and the *Children's Services Act (CSA)*. Liaison must have an understanding of the public education system, including special education, and the foster care system, and how to access school-based resources (including transportation) for youth in foster care.

Essential Duties:

- Serve as the school division designated contact to promote educational stability for students in foster care, including supporting best practices for local policies and procedures.
- Participate in training to ensure understanding of regulations and processes as they pertain to the enrollment and educational stability of youth in foster care.
- Serve as a resource to school administration and staff, parents, foster parents, and other providers to ensure educational stability policies and procedures are followed and documented at all times.
- Encourage a cooperative process with all parties involved to complete the enrollment process.
- Facilitate communication between the LDSS case worker and other foster care liaisons, as needed.
- Ensure the LDSS caseworker receives current educational information when a school placement is needed to promote educational stability.
- Ensure school division representation in the Best Interest Determination (BID) process for youth in foster care within an appropriate timeframe.
- Assist in coordinating transportation for youth in foster care to remain in the school of origin by notifying the school of origin transportation designee and communicating identified options with the student's LDSS case worker.
- Ensure staff is trained about the benefits of educational stability and the immediate enrollment process used for youth in foster care.
- Provide appropriate guidance documents and forms to schools for immediate enrollment.
- When in the youth's best interest as determined by the BID process, advocate for immediate enrollment in the receiving school to avoid gaps in education.
- Assist in the dispute resolution process, as needed.
- Provide feedback on the implementation and efficacy of educational stability policies and procedures regarding youth in foster care.

APPENDIX E:

Educational Stability Liaison

Job Description for Local Departments of Social Services

Purpose:

Collaboration between school divisions and local departments of social services (LDSS) is recognized as an important component of working to improve educational outcomes for youth in care. The federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) of 2015 encourage coordination between education and departments of social services.

Knowledge Base:

Liaison must be versed in current laws, regulations, policies, and guidance governing education services for youth in foster care, such as the *Fostering Connections Act*, *ESSA*, and the *Children's Services Act* (CSA). Liaison must have an understanding of the public education system, including special education, and of how to access resources for youth in foster care.

Essential Duties:

- Serve as the agency designated LDSS contact to promote educational stability for students in foster care, including supporting best practices for local policies and procedures.
- Participate in training to ensure understanding of regulations and processes as they pertain to the enrollment and educational stability of youth in foster care.
- Serve as a resource to the LDSS case workers, foster parents, and other providers to ensure educational stability policies and procedures are followed and documented at all times.
- Encourage a cooperative process with all parties involved to complete the enrollment process.
- Ensure that the school division foster care liaison is informed when a school placement is needed to promote educational stability.
- Ensure that both foster care liaisons are notified when more than one school division is involved.
- Assist, as needed, in facilitating the Best Interest Determination (BID) process for youth in foster care according to guidance.
- Assist in coordinating transportation for youth in foster care to remain in the school of origin.
- Ensure LDSS staff are trained about the benefits of educational stability and the immediate enrollment process used for youth in foster care.
- When in the youth's best interest as determined by the BID process, advocate for immediate enrollment in the receiving school to avoid gaps in education.
- Assist in the dispute resolution process, as needed.
- Provide feedback on the implementation and efficacy of educational stability policies and procedures regarding youth in foster care.

APPENDIX F: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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