

FRIEND SCHOOL FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Under the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Title I, taking effect on December 10, 2016 requiring each school district to have a Foster Care Plan. This plan is intended to eliminate barrier preventing children and youth in foster care from meeting the Oklahoma Academic Standards and experiencing success in their educational pursuits. Friend School students who are placed in Foster Care will be provided a free, appropriate public education provided to all students in the state of Oklahoma.

School District Assurances

- Each 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.
- The state child welfare agency will coordinate with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the school in which enrolled at the time of placement.
- If it is not in the best interest of the child to return to the resident school, the child will immediately be provided the appropriate enrollment in the Friend School District.
- The Friend School District will gather and maintain educational records and promptly send them to the district where the student moves.

Friend School Point of Contact

The Superintendent will decide who will be assigned to be the Point of Contact for students placed in foster care. The point of contact serves a dual role serving as the homeless liaison and the foster care point of contact. The name of the person in this position will be submitted to the Oklahoma State Department of Education on an annual basis.

The Point of Contact (POC) will be the liaison between Friend School and the Grady County Department of Human Services, foster parents, the District and other districts involved in determining the best interest of the child and making sure their education is not interrupted.

In addition the POC is responsible for:

- Coordinating with the corresponding child welfare agency;
- Leading the development of making the best interest determination, and documenting;

- Facilitate the transfer of records and immediate enrollment;
- Facilitate sharing of data with child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA and other privacy protocols;
- Work to create and implement a plan of transportation of the student;
- Oversight to ensure regular attendance of the students;
- Provide professional development and training to school staff on the Title I provisions and educational needs of children in foster care.

Committee

A committee will meet to determine the appropriate placement of each foster child. The committee will be comprised of the site administrator, the Foster Care Liaison, and a member of the CWA. In emergency situations the CWA has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then consult with the LEA. The best interest determination may be revisited if needed. Determining factors to be evaluated:

- Proximity of the resource family home to the child's present school;
- Safety;
- Age and grade of the child as related to the other best interest factors;
- Needs of the child, including social adjustment and well-being;
- Child's performance, continuity of education and engagement in the school the child presently attends;
- Child's special education programming if the child is classified;
- Time of year;
- Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification;
- Anticipated duration of the placement;
- Preferences of the child;
- Preferences of the child's parents or educational decision maker;
- The child's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers;
- Placement of siblings;
- Influence of the school climate on the child; including safety;
- Availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs;
- History of school transfers and how they have impacted the child;
- Length of the commute and the impact on the child based on developmental stage;
- Whether the child is a student with a disability under the IDEA who is receiving special education and related services or a student on a 504 who is receiving

special education or related aids and services and, if so the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin;

- Whether the child is EL and is receiving language services, and if so the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement the final decision will be made the Child Welfare Agency. The CWA is positioned to access vital non-educational factors, and is able to gain information from multiple parties. Transportation costs will not be considered when determining a child's best interest.

Enrollment of Students

Foster care parents, social workers, and other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in Friend School. We understand that all the necessary paperwork may not be available as we work to make a smooth transition for the student. This may include birth certificate, shot record, academic records, etc. The home district will be contacted and adaptations made. After enrollment the following guardianship or legal custody documents will be provided by the foster family or CWA: Power of Attorney; Affidavit, or Court Order.

IDEA Students

The IDEA, Part B directs school districts to make a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) available to all eligible children with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). FAPE under IDEA includes the provision of special education and related services at no cost to the parents in accordance with a properly developed Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each child's placement decision must be made by a group of knowledgeable persons. The Friend Public School District will operate in accordance with all state and federal laws regarding special education students. Special education services will be provided to foster care students as they are to all students following the guidelines below:

- Educational placement will be determined annually and will be based on the child's IEP in accordance with the child's individual needs.
- The child will be placed in the least restrictive environment and unless they require some other arrangement they will attend the school that he/she would attend if not disabled.
- Timely and expedited evaluations and eligibility determinations for highly mobile children with disabilities will be made when possible.
- Children in foster care will have access to related aids and services that are designed to meet their educational needs.
- Children will have access to comparable services including summer and extended school year services if applicable.

- Children in foster care will not be discriminated against and are considered a protected group.

EL Students

The Friend Public School District will ensure that EL students in foster care will participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs by doing the following:

- Identifying and assessing all potential EL students in a timely, valid and reliable manner;
- Provide EL students with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful;
- Sufficiently staff and support the language assistance programs for EL students;
- Ensure that EL students have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- Avoid unnecessary segregation of EL students;
- Ensure that EL students with disabilities are evaluated in a timely and appropriate manner for special education and disability-related services and that their language needs are considered in these evaluations and delivery of services;
- Meet the needs of EL students who opt out of language assistance programs;
- Monitor and evaluate EL students in language assistance programs following federal guidelines;
- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of school districts language assistance program and progress of each student;
- Ensure meaningful communication with the parents of the students.

Transportation

The Friend Public School District will collaborate with the CWA to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation is provided to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin. The Friend Public School District will also work with the CWA to reach an agreement in regards to covering the transportation costs. The agreement will cover how the transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care. Each agreement can/will vary greatly because the needs of each child should be considered in making the decision on transportation.

The regular transportation policies approved by the Friend Public School District will be followed in transporting foster care students. Drivers will be appropriately licensed, certified, and with the required DMV and background checks. Various public school vehicles may be used to transport students depending on the circumstances. Students

that must be transported out of state will be school board approved as required by Oklahoma law.

Student Records

The Friend Public School District will share education records with the CWA that are allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This allows educational agencies to disclose without parental consent educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to State and Tribal agencies.