

SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

BEST PRACTICE WHEN IT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST FOR A CHILD TO CHANGE SCHOOLS

Priority One: *Maintaining Educational Stability Whenever Possible*

Please refer to the [MOU](#) between the Department for Children and Families and the Agency of Education, the [guidance to the MOU](#) and the [Best Interest Determination Document](#).

When children or youth enter state custody and are placed out of their homes, it is critical that they remain in their current school unless it has been determined that it is *not* in their best interest to remain there. This practice generally reduces unnecessary trauma for the child and promotes their short and long-term educational success. The Best Interest Determination is a tool to assess all of the factors that need to be considered when making this very important decision.

Occasionally it is in the Best Interest for a child to change schools. The traveling distance to the school of origin may be the determining factor. Here are some guidelines to help mitigate the trauma in these circumstances.

Best Practice for transitioning a Student in the custody of the state to a new school

DCF Worker Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes Enrollment paperwork for the child in the new school immediately (as per DCF Policy) <i>It is best practice to develop a plan for the child/youth to transition from school to school during a natural school break per DCF policy 146.</i> Address plan with both schools for maintaining the child in their home school until the transition takes place. • Ensures that communication is clear to all team members, and especially to the child/youth. • Discusses new living situation with youth • Coordinates safety plan with new school (if applicable). • Introduces child to new school. Perhaps schedules a day visit to work out scheduling and meet with the guidance office prior as part of the transition. • Schedules a day for the student to shadow a student in the new school. • Sends letter requesting that the worker receives copies of all student report cards.
Sending School (aka Home School) Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunity for positive closure with students, staff and friends if possible. • Informs student's teachers. • Sending school <i>immediately</i> requests that current teachers complete an up to date assessment of student's work and sends to the new school. This includes pertinent curricular information. • Mails records ASAP. Follows up with final grades ASAP. • Guidance Counselor contacts receiving school to offer support. • Faxes copy of IEP, if applicable. • Develops key contact list of personnel who worked with and knew the child and send to new school. • Identifies who the child can contact directly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with youth, foster family and DCF worker to support the youth's success in the school. • Connect case managers with special services liaison.
Receiving School Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with the sending school to have the transition occur during a natural school break. • Faxes request for academic records to the sending school. Once completed, enrollment packet is reviewed. • Meets student and foster parents. • Makes and describes student's first day plan. • Plans for a student shadowing day prior to the student beginning school there. • It is helpful to have a Transition Manager identified and to have the Student Support Team monitor the student's entry for at least the first two weeks. • Develop school entry plan including timeline after consulting with district coordinator and reviewing IEP, 504, 117 and/or transition plan, administration.
Resource family Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with the youth to identify strengths, challenges and aspirations the youth has for their education. • Listens to the youth in foster care regarding what they want to do • Discusses transportation plan to new school with youth. • Discusses school day schedule and expectations with the youth. • Together with DCF worker, discusses safety boundaries of current school situation. • Identifies extracurricular activities and interests with the youth and supports signing up or becoming involved in their new community.
Youth Involvement (Contingent on developmental age and ability to process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in planning for living in foster home • Participates in planning for attending school and educational program. <p>Participates in identifying and signing up for extracurricular activities or interest groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is encouraged/given the opportunity to voice what he/she would like to have happen. • Is encouraged/given the opportunity to ask questions/request support. • Is kept informed of decisions, processes, etc.