



## **The Child's Team and Screening for Educational Well-Being**

**There are many things to consider when a child comes into custody** – permanency, well-being and law abidance are the primary issues that DCF is required to focus on. Educational stability and success is one of the well-being measures.

**Educational stability is directly impacted by the child's living arrangement** and so schooling needs must be one of the factors considered when deciding where the child will reside.

**We are well aware that there are multiple legal mandates** around placing a child and sometimes it is challenging to know which mandate to follow in order to achieve the child's best interest. The child's team is a vital resource during this complex decision-making process.

1. The immediate concern when a child comes into state care is that they have a roof over their head. Ideally the Resource Coordinator and Social Worker have a copy of the child's Coordinated Services Plan and other team member input to help guide this initial placement decision. Educational needs is one of the factors to be considered at this time.
  - a. Note that for a planned placement an [Educational Best Interest Determination](#) (BID) form (See Forms) can be filled out with input from the child's team prior to their coming into custody.
2. After DCF has coordinated the child's immediate living arrangement, it is important to pull together the child's interdisciplinary team to inform longer-term decisions. This meeting may be combined with another child team providing the issues of educational stability and best interest remain an important focus. This should happen within 3-5 days of intake. There are policies, forms, and meeting templates available to help structure this process.
3. The document developed to ensure that all relevant information is considered is Vermont's *Educational Best Interest Determination* form. DCF staff and the child's team are asked to complete this tool whenever a DCF-involved child changes placement as it provides DCF with the material they need to make an informed placement decision. The child's team will be asked to look at:
  - The current or potential living arrangement of the child and whether geography will impact educational stability.
  - Where is the child attending/likely to attend school? Will that require a request for the child to maintain stability in their hometown using the Memorandum of Understanding between DCF and AOE?



- Are there local resources that can help maintain a child in their home community including assistance with transportation and resource family recruitment?
4. Other documents available (see Tools) to help inform or organize the BID process are the:
- a. [MOU Between DCF and AOE to Maintain Educational Placement](#) – which allows DCF to request that a child remain in their familiar school if residentially placed in a different school catchment area.
  - b. The [MOU Guidance](#) – which clarifies how the MOU is to be implemented.
  - c. [BID Meeting Invite Letter](#)
  - d. [BID Meeting Agenda](#)
  - e. [BID Meeting Checklist](#)
  - f. [Best Practices for School Transitions](#) – discusses how and when a child’s school transition would best occur and outlines the role of different team members.
5. Once the child’s living arrangement is confirmed, the team can transition their attention to the child’s long-term academic success. It is not enough just to keep the student educationally stable. We have a responsibility to monitor their broader learning needs.
- Ask:
- What educational services and environment are necessary for this student to reach their full potential?
  - How can the team work together to ensure that this child is supported now and in the future?

