



Transportation to Maintain Educational Stability: Points to Consider

School transportation can be a significant factor in determining what is in a child's best interest when they are in out-of-home care. We have a responsibility to maintain a student in their school of origin, but must also consider the impact on the child of travelling from one town to another in order to maintain educational continuity.

Some points to consider when determining best interest include:

- The distance a child would be traveling – a particular issue in rural Vermont where there are few public transport options.
- The developmental age of the child
- Physical and emotional health issues
- Safety issues, both personal & with peers
- Availability of Foster/Kin parents to transport

These points, and others, are included in the [“Educational Best Interest Determination” form](#) (to be filled out before a child is placed) and where they are combined with other child well-being questions to guide placement decisions. It is important to note that child transportation decisions are *not* about what is convenient for the school or family, it is about what is best for the young person overall.

It is important to identify how the child will be transported in a way that will be comfortable and safe for them when it is determined to be in their best interest.

Federal child welfare reimbursement dollars are available to assist with school transportation costs. While this does not remove all challenges regarding transportation, it does lessen the burden on Foster/Kin families or other drivers and school districts. Please refer to the [MOU Guidance](#) document (also in Appendix) to identify how the transportation cost will be funded. Most often if the MOU is utilized, it is the responsibility of DCF to fund the transportation cost.

Vermont's Parental and Family Leave Act permits foster parents and guardians limited time away from work to assist foster children with their academic needs - including transportation. Many employees are allowed to take up to 24 hours per year (4 hours per month) of short-term unpaid leave for children's academic needs, medical





emergencies, and the like. Foster children and wards are included in this law. Note that this applies to employers with 15 or more employees, and that to qualify employees must be continuously employed by the same employer for a period of one year for an average of at least 30 hours per week.

Additional information is available at the Attorney General's [website](#).

A discussion with both schools is vital to brainstorm ideas and coordinate logistics.

There may be connecting bus routes so the child could change buses midway and be transported under what would appear to be “normal” circumstances. If this is not possible and often it is not, here is a list of some of the people you may want to consider asking to help out with the transportation need:

- Foster families
- Extended family members of foster families
- Birth family members and extended family
- School staff (barring any conflict of interest)
- Other school/education staff that may be traveling in the same direction
- Neighbors and friends of the foster or birth family as appropriate
- Respite providers

Think creatively and be open to a variety of possibilities. One Vermont district has an agreement with the local Sheriff's Department to provide transportation. Other districts have private individuals with the clearance to drive children in DCF custody.

When a transportation plan has been agreed upon, document it in writing for both schools and any other partners.

Note: Several documents are important to legal/funding aspects of Accessing Transportation, including:

- [Policy 151](#) – The MOU between AOE and DCF
- [MOU Guidance](#)
- [Educational Best Interest Determination](#) questions (Appendix B of the MOU Guidance)
- [Best Practice for School Transitions](#) – outlining the responsibilities of different parties in coordinating a smooth school transition when changing schools is determined to be in the child's best interest.

(See Forms in the Screen for Success Section of the Toolkit)

