

WOODALL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Foster Care Plan

Approved **12/1/2016**

This plan is to address the requirement for foster care provisions under Title I of ESSA which require State Educational Agencies (SDE) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) to ensure educational stability and minimize educational disruptions for children in foster care.

Foster Care Plan

The Woodall Public School District is committed to provide all students with sound educational experiences. We recognize that foster children are at an increased risk of grade retention, gaps in academic achievement, low high school graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment. These provisions promote greater stability for children in foster care so that they can continue their education without disruption, maintain important relationships with peers and adults, and have the opportunity to achieve college- and career readiness.

The educational stability includes assurances that (1) a child in foster care will remain in the child's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest in that school and (2) if a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will be immediately enrolled in the school of residence, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

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 the child is 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 to the Woodall Public School District.
- The Woodall Public School District will gather and maintain educational records and promptly send them to any district where the student moves.

Foster Care Child Liaison (POC)

The Woodall Public School District will assign at least one person to serve as a Foster Care Child Liaison, or Point of Contact (POC). The name of this person will be turned in annual to the OSDE through the online Grants Management System by September 30th of each year. If additional staff members are needed to meet the requirements, the district will make assignments as deemed necessary. The Foster Child Liaison will work in the best interest of the child to ensure that all educational requirements are being met. The liaison that is assigned to the position will have access available training and materials to keep them informed of any changes in the Foster Care Regulations. The liaison will work closely with state and tribal child welfare agencies to:

- Coordinating with the corresponding child welfare agency,

- Leading the development of a process for making the best interest determination,
- Documenting the best interest determination,
- Facilitating the transfer of records and immediate enrollment,
- Facilitating data sharing with the child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA and other privacy protocols,
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures,
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes,
- Ensuring that children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attending school, and
- Providing 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 care child. The committee will comprise of the site administrator or LEA representative, the Foster Care Liaison, and a member of the CWA. In emergency circumstances the CWA has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then consult with the LEA and revisit the best interest determination of the child. The determining factors that may be evaluated include:

- Proximity of the resource family home to the child's present school;
- Safety considerations;
- Age and grade level of the child as it relates to the other best interests 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 educational programming if the child is classified;
- Point of time in the year;
- Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification;
- Anticipated duration of the placement;
- Preferences of the child;
- Preferences of the child's parent(s) or educational decision maker(s)
- The child's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers;
- Placement of the child's sibling(s);
- 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;

- How the length of the commute would impact the child, based on the child's 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 with a disability under Section 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; and
- Whether the child is an EL and is receiving language services, and if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin.

*Transportation costs will not be considered when determining a child's best interests.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the child welfare agency should be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The child welfare agency is uniquely positioned to assess vital non-educational factors such as safety, sibling placements, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan. The child welfare agency also has the authority, capacity, and responsibility to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties including parents, children, schools and the court in making these decisions.

Enrollment of Students

Foster care parents, social workers or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in Woodall Public Schools. We understand that all necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) may not be immediately available and want to provide a smooth transition for the student into our district. We will contact the home school district for the records and make adaptations as needed. After enrollment the following guardianship or legal custody documents shall be provided for verification by the foster family or CWA:

- Power of attorney
- Affidavit
- Court Order

IDEA Students

The IDEA, Part B directs school districts must 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 Woodall 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.

ELL Students

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

- Identifying and assessing all potential ELL students in a timely, valid and reliable manner;
- Provide ELL students with a language assistance program that is educationally sound and proven successful;
- Sufficiently staff and support the language assistance programs for ELL students;
- Ensure that ELL students have equal opportunities to meaningfully participate in all curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- Avoid unnecessary segregation of ELL students;
- Ensure that ELL 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 ELL students who opt out of language assistance programs;
- Monitor and evaluate ELL 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 Woodall 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 Woodall 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.

Student Records

The Woodall 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.

Woodall Public Schools

Foster Care Transportation Plan

Overview

Woodall Public Schools (WPS) will work in collaboration with parents, guardians, concerned adults, students, and the local Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Welfare Office to ensure equitable access to a child in foster care's school of origin as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Children in foster care will always be allowed to enroll in their school of origin or school of residence as required under both federal and state law.

Identification

The DHS point-of-contact (POC) will identify children in foster care, who are in need of transportation assistance, by contacting the WPS POC. The WPS POC is identified as the Counseling Liaison.

Transportation

Transportation for children in foster care will be provided by the foster family, DHS, or WPS utilizing the most cost effective means to do so (475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act)).

If the child's school of origin is a WPS school and the child is placed in a foster home outside of WPS boundaries, the district POC will work with DHS and/or the foster family to determine if the school of origin remains the school of best interest for the child. This determination will primarily take the following into consideration:

- The wishes of the child;
- The wishes of the foster family (according to state law);
- The wishes of DHS;
- The distance and time required for travel;
- The safety of the child;
- Any applicable services available at the school of residence vs. the school of origin.

Additional costs for transportation (whether in-district or out-of-district) will be financed through one of the following methods as provided for under the ESSA and federal regulation (ESEA 1112(c)(5)(B)):

- DHS agrees to reimburse WPS for any additional cost;
- WPS agrees to pay for the additional cost;
- WPS and DHS agree to share the additional cost.

Additional costs are calculated by the district Transportation Office and take into account the availability of district transportation, the distance of the child's residence from the nearest applicable bus stop, and any related fuel and staffing costs necessary to in order to provide transportation.

The time required in order for the district to arrange transportation varies depending upon a number of factors such as current demand, availability of staff and/or vehicles, and location of student. For this

reason, if transportation is requested the foster family or DHS arrange for temporary transportation of the child(ren) for at least one week; however, the average time required is usually less than this.

Reasonable Distance

While WPS believes that the school of best interest for a child is most often their school of origin, this is not always the case. Sometimes, the commute time and/or distance is so great that transporting the child would have a negative impact on the child’s social and/or academic life. For this reason, WPS provides the following general guidance on what the district considers to be a reasonable commute distance and time.

- Commute distance: 10 miles.
- Commute time (one way): 20 minutes (accounting for traffic)

Disputes

It is recognized that both WPS and DHS will act with the best interests of children in mind; however, since both parties are approaching this issue from different perspectives, disputes will naturally sometimes occur. In the event of a dispute regarding the transportation of a child in foster care the following will be followed:

- The district will provide transportation until such time as the dispute is resolved (ESEA 1112(c)(5)(B)(i));
- The district policy regarding McKinney-Vento disputes will be followed (Policy 4004(IV)(C)).

This plan was created collaboratively through consultations between LEA and Department of Human Services personnel:

LEA Representative

OKDHS Representative

Signature

Signature

Printed Name

Printed Name

Title

Title

Date