

## **Foster Care Plan**

The Caney 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 Caney Public School District.
- The Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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 Caney 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.

Best Interest Determination Evaluation (Sample)

Child's Name: _____ Birthday: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____ Current District: _____ Current Site: _____ <i>Student will remain in the current school unless consideration of the following factors indicates a change of school placement is in the child's best interest (check all that apply.)</i>			
	School of Origin ( A )	Receiving School ( B )	Other Previous School Attended ( C )
Which school will better meet the relational needs of the child? Select all that apply: <input type="radio"/> Siblings <input type="radio"/> Relationships with peers <input type="radio"/> Relationships with staff Describe the relationship connections at current school: _____ _____ List strategies for maintaining important connections should other best interest determination be made: _____ _____			
Which school will better meet the individual academic needs and challenges of the child? Select all that apply: <input type="radio"/> IEP <input type="radio"/> 504 Plan <input type="radio"/> Gifted Program <input type="radio"/> Career Tech <input type="radio"/> EL Services			
Which school will better meet the social/emotional needs and challenges of the child? Select all that apply: <input type="radio"/> Social <input type="radio"/> Emotional <input type="radio"/> Safety			
Which school will better meet the unique needs and interests of the child? Select all that apply: <input type="radio"/> Extracurricular Activities <input type="radio"/> Sports <input type="radio"/> Other Student will describe the areas of desired school involvement:			

Which school will best meet the permanency goal and likelihood of reunification with parents or siblings?			
Which school is more appropriate for the child's age and length of travel? Explain: _____ _____			
Describe the child's transfer history. _____			
Which school does the student prefer to attend? Explain: _____ _____			
Which school does the caregiver or current placement provider recommends the student attend? Explain: _____			
Identify strategies for successful transition to new school and/or support in current school: _____ _____			

**Supporting Documentation**

Attach any supporting documentation used to determine best interest of child:

- Report Cards
- Progress Reports
- Achievement Data (test scores)
- Attendance Data
- IEP or Section 504 Plans
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Determination**

*Based on the information provided and considering the best interest of the child, the team has determined the following school is the most appropriate educational placement for the child:* \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members:

LEA representative: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed name*
*Signature*

CWA representative: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed name*
*Signature*

Education Decision Maker \_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed name*
*Signature*

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Printed name*
*Signature*

## Appendix E (Transportation Agreement Sample)

RE: Transportation of Foster Care Students

Dear Superintendent and Child Welfare Agency:

Fostering Connections Act (P.L. 110-351) is a federal law that protects and seeks to promote education stability for foster children. Under this Act, transportation to school must be provided to an enrolled foster care student, even though the student may be physically located in a different school district. Oklahoma law, however, prohibits school buses from crossing the transportation boundaries of another district, with a few exceptions. One such exception is by the mutual agreement of the boards of education. This letter is intended to be a Transportation Agreement designed to comply with legal requirements in the event that a participating school district must provide transportation services to a foster care child who is physically located in another participating school district.

*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Section 1112(5)(B)* stipulates: "If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, the local educational agency will provide transportation to the school of origin if:

- (I) the local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the local educational agency for the cost of such transportation;
- (II) the local educational agency agrees to pay for the cost of such transportation; or
- (III) the local educational agency and the local child welfare agency agree to share the cost of such transportation."

In order to comply with ESSA and to ensure educational stability, the receiving Local Educational Agency and the Child Welfare Agency (CWA) should aim for reaching an agreement in regard to how the transportation will be provided, arranged and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care. This letter is also intended to be a Transportation Agreement between the LEA and CWA, designed to comply with ESSA requirements in terms of transportation costs.

If you wish to participate in the Agreement, please have this document approved by the board of education and provide me with a signed copy of the Agreement. I will then provide each of the participating parties with an executed copy.

Respectfully,

*Name*

Foster Care Coordinator

*School District Name*



\_\_\_\_\_  
*Child Welfare Agency Name*

Transportation cost agreed to: \_\_\_\_\_

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Board clerk*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Receiving School District Name*

Transportation cost agreed to: \_\_\_\_\_

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Board clerk*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*School District Name*

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Board clerk*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_