

## Working With Your District’s “Point of Contact” to Support Students in Foster Care

### What are the educational challenges of students in foster care?

Students in foster care are children and youth who have been removed from their caregivers due to allegations of abuse or neglect and who are in the State’s care. While they are in foster care, they may be living with foster parents or other members of their family. These students often experience trauma and multiple changes in home and school placements. Because of these experiences and the resulting educational instability, they are much more likely to experience poor educational outcomes – including low school attendance rates, GPAs, and graduation rates – than their peers.



The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is a federal law that went into effect in December 2015. It includes strategies to help students in foster care succeed in school. One of these strategies is that school districts must designate “Points of Contact” for students in care if the corresponding child welfare agency does so. Your district’s “Point of Contact” (POC) will provide crucial supports to ensure that students in care have the opportunity to succeed in school. As a teacher or as district/school staff, you can make a huge impact on the lives of students in foster care by partnering with your POC.

### Rights of and Protections for Students in Foster Care Under ESSA



#### School of Origin

The student has a right to remain in their school of origin, even if they move to a different home placement, unless it is not in their best interest to do so.



#### Immediate Enrollment and Records Transfer

If the student changes schools, they must be enrolled immediately, even without required records. The enrolling school must immediately contact the prior school for academic and other records.

#### Transportation to School of Origin

School districts and child welfare agencies must work together to ensure the student receives transportation for the duration of their time in foster care.





**How can I partner with my POC to support the education rights of students in foster care, particularly their right to remain in their school of origin, right to receive transportation to their school of origin, and right to immediate enrollment and records transfer?**

- Participate in “best interest determination” discussions (processes for assessing whether it is in the student’s interest to stay in their school of origin) when asked to do so by your district’s POC.
- If you notice a student in foster care is having difficulty getting to school, get in touch with your district POC so they can determine whether the student is facing transportation challenges.
- If you know a student who is transferring to a new school has an Individualized Education Plan, a Section 504 accommodation plan, or a behavioral intervention plan, let your district POC know so they can ensure that information is transferred to the new school promptly.
- Work with your POC to ensure that your school staff and child welfare social workers receive the educational records and updates they need to support students with whom they are working.



**What else can I do to support the educational success of students in foster care?**

- Work with your POC to help monitor attendance and course progress for students in foster care whom you are working with, to ensure they are attending, engaged, and learning.
- Find out if your district offers any training or professional development opportunities about the needs of students in foster care, the impact of trauma, and/or trauma-informed learning. If so, sign up. If not, ask the district to provide these types of opportunities in the future.
- Ask for help from your POC in helping students in foster care access the educational and social supports and services you believe they need.
- Ask for help from your POC in convening meetings of key adults in the lives of students in foster care to help resolve issues that arise in their education. During these education meetings, work together with the student and other supportive adults to proactively plan for their futures.



**Where can I find more information?**

- The “Point of Contact” at your district is \_\_\_\_\_ . Reach out to your Point of Contact and set up a time to learn about what your district is doing to help students in foster care succeed, and how you can get more involved.
- Contact FosterEd at [info@foster-ed.org](mailto:info@foster-ed.org) for more information.

**Thank you for all you are doing to help students in foster care succeed!**