

SULPHUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Foster Care Plan

Under the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1112(c)(5)(B) Title I educational stability provisions take effect on December 10, 2016. By such date, each school district shall have a Foster Care Plan developed and disseminated to all stakeholders.

In Section 1111(c)(5) of ESSA, the school district must collaborate with the Child Welfare Agency and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies (CWA) to implement the Title I educational stability provisions. Therefore, each school district shall develop a clear, written Foster Care Plan. As such, the Foster Care Plan for Sulphur Public School District shall be as follows:

1. LEA Point of Contact and Responsibilities

The superintendent will serve as the Foster Care Point of Contact (POC). The POC may also serve as the homeless student coordinator. This designation will occur by December 10, 2016 and will be updated annually. The updated name of the POC will be submitted to the OSDE through the Grants Management System by September 30th of each year. If additional staff members are needed to meet the requirements, the superintendent will make assignments as deemed necessary. The POC will work in the best interest of the child to ensure that all educational requirements are being met.

The POC will work closely with the CWA to:

- Coordinate with the corresponding child welfare agency POC to implement Title I provisions;
- Lead the development of a process for making the best interest determination;
- Document the best interest determination;
- Facilitate the transfer of records and immediate enrollment;
- Facilitate data sharing with the child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA and other privacy protocols;
- Develop and coordinate local transportation procedures;
- Manage best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes;
- Ensure that children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attending school; and
- Provide professional development and training to school staff on the Title I provisions and educational needs of children in foster care, as needed.

2. Decision-making process

A committee will meet to determine if the school of origin is not in the best interest of each foster care child and the appropriate placement of the child. The committee will be comprised of the site administrator or representative, the POC, 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 district and revisit the best interest determination of the child.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the CWA will be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. The CWA 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 CWA 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.

3. The type of documentation or records that should be shared between parties

Foster care parents, social workers, or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in foster care in the school district without having the necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) This is to help aid the student with a smooth transition into the district. The receiving school district will contact the school district of origin 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

Sulphur Public School District will share education records with the CWA that are allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other state privacy laws. This allows educational agencies to disclose without parental consent educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to the CWA.

4. Collaborative structure, such as regularly scheduled meetings in which relevant individuals can participate in a particular process

The POC will meet with the site administrator, school counselor, classroom teacher, and foster parent as needed to discuss the progress of the child in foster care and will document the results of the meetings. All decisions will be made utilizing a collaborative team approach to determine what will be in the best interest of the child.

5. The best interest determination document regarding the child's school placement (school of origin or the receiving school)

The Sulphur Public School District shall utilize the attached **Best Interest Determination Form** for each child in foster care. The final determination as to what is in the best interest of the child will be made by the CWA.

6. Transportation procedures

In addition to regular transportation routes, the school district will collaborate with the CWA when transportation is required to maintain children placed in foster care in a school of origin outside the attendance area of the district when it is in the best interest of the child. The superintendent/POC will invite appropriate district officials, the CWA, and officials from the other districts or agencies to promptly arrange cost-effective transportation for the child.

7. Responsibilities and costs related to student transportation

Sulphur Public Schools 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 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 unique needs of each child should be considered in making the decisions on transportation.

8. Clear written policies that will remove barriers to immediate enrollment and record transfers for children in foster care

The Sulphur Public School Board of Education has modified existing board policies to eliminate any barriers to enrollment and/or transfer of educational records for children in foster care.