

PANAMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 1680
Panama, OK 74951

Phone: (918) 963-0411
Fax: (918) 963-2638

Panama Foster Care School Plan Guidance from the Oklahoma State School Boards Association

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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 Panama Public School District shall be as follows:

1. LEA Point of Contact and responsibilities.

The superintendent will designate at least one person to serve as the Foster Care Point of Contact (POC). The POC may also be the homeless student coordinator. This designation will occur by December 10, 2016, and shall be updated annually. The name of this person will be turned in 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 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 LEA's 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 LEA 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.

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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

Panama 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 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).

Panama school district shall utilize the following sample form from the Oklahoma State Department of Education in making a "best interest" determination 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.

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Best Interest Determination Evaluation

Child's Name: _____ Birthday: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____ Current District: _____

Current Site: _____ 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.)

_____ 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: _____ Siblings, _____ Relationships with peers, _____ 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: _____ IEP, _____ 504 Plan, _____ Gifted Program, _____ Career Tech, _____ EL Services

Which school will better meet the social/emotional needs and challenges of the child? Select all that apply: _____ Social, _____ Emotional, _____ Safety

Which school will better meet the unique needs and interests of the child? Select all that apply: _____ Extracurricular, Activities, _____ Sports, _____ 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: _____

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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 is _____

Team Members:

LEA representative Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature CWA Representative: _____

Printed name: _____

Signature Education Decision Maker: _____

Printed name: _____

Signature Other: _____

Printed name: _____

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6. Transportation procedures.

Children in foster care will be entitled to transportation services in the same manner as all other children in the school district. 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 their usual attendance area or district when it is in the best interest of the student. Under the supervision of the superintendent, the POC will invite appropriate district officials, the CWA, and officials from other districts or agencies to promptly arrange cost-effective transportation for the student.

7. Responsibilities and costs related to student transportation.

Panama 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 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 decision on transportation.

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

Panama board of education has modified existing board policy FD to eliminate any barriers to enrollment and/or transfer of educational records for children in foster care.