



FY24 Foster Care Transportation Plan

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Newton

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Superintendent Signature

Date

6/1/2023

Samantha Fuhrey

Print Name of Superintendent



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The Georgia Department of Education (Department) is required to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care. (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(E)). In coordination with state and tribal child welfare agencies, the Department must ensure that its LEAs implement the Title I educational stability requirements for children in foster care, including ensuring that:

- A child in foster care remains in his or her school of origin, unless it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in that child's best interest;
- If it is not in the child's best interest to stay in his or her school of origin, the child is immediately enrolled in the new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment; and
- That the new (enrolling) school immediately contacts the school of origin to obtain relevant academic and other records. (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i)-(iii)). In fulfilling this role, the SEA should coordinate with the state or tribal child welfare agency to develop and disseminate uniform guidelines for implementing the Title I educational stability provisions. Developing uniform statewide policies and procedures for ensuring educational stability for children in foster care, as many States have already done under the Fostering Connections Act, will facilitate successful implementation at the local level. This is particularly important given the shared agency responsibility for educational stability under Title I and the Fostering Connections Act, and because a single LEA or local child welfare agency will likely have to collaborate with multiple partner agencies in implementing these provisions.

Additionally, the SEA must conduct regular monitoring and oversight to guarantee appropriate implementation of these provisions at the local level. (See 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.331(d), 200.328(a); 34 C.F.R. § 76.770).

On the state level, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), which houses the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) periodically sends a list of children in foster care that are flagged in the Department's student information system for information sharing and reporting purposes; however, on the local level, LEAs will be notified directly by foster parents, Court Appointed Special Advocate, DFCS case workers or Education Support Monitors (ESM), within the Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) unit of DFCS. Once identified, LEAs must implement its plan to ensure educational stability for children in care. For the best interest of the children in care, LEAs should follow all mandated regulations under FERPA and keep the status of these children confidential.

As a result, the Department is requiring all LEAs, including virtual school and charter schools that function as an LEA, to complete a Foster Care Transportation Plan. The plan should be completed in addition to the development and implementation of written transportation procedures and the identification of a Foster Care Point of Contact.

Instructions for submission:

- After the LEA superintendent signs the assurances, scan the entire document as a PDF and save it as the "FY23Foster Care Transportation Plan".
- Upload the signed PDF version of the document to the CLIP online portal via the Consolidated Application for FY23.

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NOTE: In order to answer the questions below, refer to the [Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care](#).

I. Foster Care Transportation Plan: PLANNING

A. The LEA's role is to have a transportation plan in place for children in foster care to their school of origin. Describe your plan to:

1. Coordinate transportation with the local child welfare agency.
2. Implement steps to be taken if additional costs are incurred.
3. Execute the local dispute resolution process.

Include the roles of key players (e.g. LEA Foster Care Point of Contact, LEA Superintendent, LEA Federal Program Director, EPAC Unit Education Support Monitor, Case Worker, Court Appointed Special Advocate, Juvenile Court representative, etc.) *Please limit the response to 2,000 characters.*

Coordinate transportation with the local child welfare agency.

Real time coordination will occur between Case Managers (CM), Education Support Monitor (ESM-DFCS POC), Foster Care Contact (FC- LEA POC), Foster Parents (FP), and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) when applicable, regarding foster children entering and exiting care; changing placements; enrollment and withdrawal; and making best interest determinations. When transportation is an issue, those parties will collaborate to develop a transportation plan that meets the needs of the individual child. "No cost plans" will be explored first and may include the following:

1. Foster parent transports child to school of origin (within 25 miles round trip);
2. Foster parent transports child to nearest school transportation pick up location; or
3. LEA will follow existing plan for transporting children with disabilities when the foster child is disabled.

Implement steps to be taken if additional costs are incurred.

In the event that the above options are not feasible and additional costs are incurred, LEA and DFCS will share transportation costs: DFCS assuming responsibility for extraordinary costs such as contracting with transportation companies, and LEA assuming liability for costs associated with re-routing LEA transportation. Together, CM, ESM, FC, FP, and CASA will explore the following options:

1. LEA will re-route transportation to pick child up at nearest bus stop or at foster home (as determined by Transportation Department) and transport directly to school of origin;
2. LEA will re-route transportation to pick child up at agreed-upon point at county line in the event that child is placed in a neighboring county;
3. DFCS will arrange for payment to foster parent for transportation farther than 25 miles round trip; or
4. DFCS will utilize existing contracts with transportation companies to provide transportation to school of origin or to agreed-upon point at county line when child is placed in neighboring county.

Execute the local dispute resolution process.

LEA and DFCS will work cooperatively to develop transportation plans that ensure the educational stability of children enrolled in LEA. In the event of a dispute, LEA and DFCS will defer to LEA Chief Strategy and Support Services Officer and DFCS County Director for final determination of resolution. In accordance with ESEA section 1112(c)(5)(B)(i), LEA will provide or arrange for adequate and appropriate transportation during the dispute resolution process.



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B. What steps should an LEA and local child welfare agency take to ensure that transportation is provided immediately, even if they face difficulty reaching agreement on how to pay for additional transportation costs? *Please limit the response to 2,000 characters.*

LEA and DFCS will work cooperatively to ensure that transportation is not a barrier to the educational stability of children in foster care. To that end, the partners will follow the steps outlined below if they face difficulty reaching an agreement on how to pay for additional transportation costs:

1. As outlined in Section A, it is pre-determined that LEA will assume financial responsibility for costs incurred as the result of the re-routing of school buses while DFCS will assume financial responsibility for costs associated with reimbursing foster parents for travel or the cost of contracting with local transportation companies.
2. Initial transportation planning will occur at the lowest level between CM, ESM (DFCS POC), and FC (LEA POC). Foster Parents and CASA will be included as appropriate. Disputes will be forwarded to the LEA Chief Strategy and Support Services Officer and DFCS Custody County Director for resolution.
3. Final determination of how to pay for additional transportation costs will be made by LEA Chief Operations Officer and Chief Strategy and Support Services Officer.
4. Daily attendance will not be impacted by transportation disputes between LEA and DFCS. In accordance with ESEA section 1112(c)(5)(B)(i), LEA will provide or arrange for adequate and appropriate transportation to and from the child’s school of origin during the dispute resolution process.

C. The LEA must designate a Foster Care Point of Contact that coordinates with the local child welfare agency. Describe the point of contact’s role and responsibilities. *Please limit the response to 2,000 characters.*

The LEA’s Homeless/Foster Care Liaison will serve as the point of contact that coordinates with local DFCS. This individual will assume responsibility for streamlined communication and collaboration with DFCS Case Managers and Education Support Monitor (DFCS POC). Such collaboration will ensure the smooth implementation of provisions outlined in ESSA to include thoughtful Best Interest Determinations, appropriate and timely transportation plans for those children placed out of the zone of their school of origin, and, immediate enrollment and records transfer. In addition, the LEA POC will facilitate training for LEA staff with regards to the unique challenges of children in foster care; ensure monitoring of attendance and progress of foster children enrolled in LEA; and ensure effective and confidential data collection and sharing.

II. Foster Care Transportation Plan: GUIDING QUESTIONS			
A. If a child is placed within the LEA’s school attendance area and projected transportation cost are negligible, transportation should be immediately provided without supplemental assistance from the local child welfare agency. If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, the LEA will provide transportation to the school of origin if:			
	YES	NO	N/A
1. The local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the cost of such transportation.	No		
2. The LEA agrees to pay for the cost of such transportation.	No		
3. The LEA and local child welfare agency agree to share the cost of such transportation.	Yes		



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Describe the agreement the LEA has made with the local child welfare agency regarding transportation costs. *Please limit the response to 2,000 characters.*

In the event that additional transportation costs are unavoidable, LEA and DFCS will share transportation costs. DFCS will assume financial responsibility for extraordinary costs such as contracting with transportation companies or paying foster parents to transport farther than 25 miles. The LEA will assume financial responsibility for costs associated with re-routing LEA transportation.

	YES	NO	N/A
B. All LEAs must meet the requirement to provide transportation to children who are in foster care to their schools of origin (<i>Similar to the McKinney-Vento requirement for students experiencing homelessness</i>). Does your LEA currently provide transportation services? If no, describe your plan to meet this mandate.	Yes		

Please limit the response to 2,000 characters.

Yes, Newton County School System currently provides transportation services to foster care students.



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ASSURANCES

By checking the box beside each statement and by affixing my signature to these Assurances, I certify that I have read each and agree to be held accountable for the content of each of the following statements:

- The LEA will collaborate with State or local child welfare agency to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin when in their best interest will be provided, arranged and funded for the duration of time in foster care.
- The LEA ensures that children in foster care needing transportation to the school or origin promptly receive such transportation in a cost-effective manner.
- The LEA ensures that children in foster care remain in the school or origin while any disputes regarding transportation costs are being resolved.
- The LEA will collaborate with State or local child welfare agency to provide transportation if a child is placed in foster care placement across district, county, or State lines.
- In accordance to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Fostering Connections Act, the LEA will continue to provide transportation to children that exited foster care for the remainder of the school year, if it is in the best interest of the student.

I am authorized to sign and submit this application on behalf of the applicant. My signature certifies that all information included in the application is accurate. I understand that all information submitted is subject to verification.

Newton County Schools
LEA Name

Mrs. Samantha Fuhrey
Printed Name of Superintendent


Signature of Superintendent
(Please sign in blue ink only)

Superintendent
Title

6/1/2023
Date