



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

# Foster Care Education: Basics

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# Objectives

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## Participants will...

- become familiarized with the statutory requirements to supports students in foster care within their LEA
- be able to utilize the tools derived from this training to collaborate with the child welfare agency to see school stability become a reality for our students in foster care



# Setting the Stage

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# Acronyms

**ESSA-** Every Student Succeeds Act

**LEA-** Local Educational Agency

**CWA-** Child Welfare Agency

**POC-** Point of Contact

**IEP-** Individualized Education Program

**BID-** Best Interest Determination

# Foster Care Definition

*24-hour (a day) substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency (DCS, tribal, or local) has placement and care responsibility.*

**Children in foster care are not considered 'homeless' or McKinney-Vento eligible.**

For clarity on unique foster care scenarios, please see the [joint letter](#) from ADE/DCS.

# DCS Stats

## Total Youth in Care

9,267

- Kinship- 4,063 (43.84%)
- Foster Family- 2,452 (26.46%)
- Congregate Care- 1,537 (16.59%)

## School Age Youth (4-18+)

6,726 (72.58%)

## Total FC Moves (FY24)

20,052

- 54.90 moves per day avg.
- X.XX moves per kid avg.

# School Stability Rationale

- Friendships
- Class Credits
- Education Services
- Delayed Enrollment
- School Discipline
- Graduation Rate



# Quick Summary

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# Fostering Connections Act

## The child welfare agency must have a plan for school stability

### CWA Assurances

- **placement considers** the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the **proximity to the school** in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; **and**
- **coordination to ensure that the child remains in the school** in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement; **or**
- if remaining in such school is **not in the best interests** of the child, the CWA and LEA provide immediate and appropriate **enrollment in a new school**, with all the educational records of the child provided to the school

ESSA Foster  
Care School  
Stability  
Assurances

- **School of Origin**
- **Best Interest Determination (BID)**
- **Transportation**
- **Immediate Enrollment**

# Question

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How many schools did you attend from Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade?



# School of Origin

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# Remain at School of Origin

Children in foster care have the right to remain in their school of origin.

*“(i) any such child enrolls or remains in such child’s school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in such child’s best interest to attend the school of origin, which decision shall be based on all factors relating to the child’s best interest, including consideration of the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement;” -- [1111\(g\)\(1\)\(E\)\(i\)](#)*

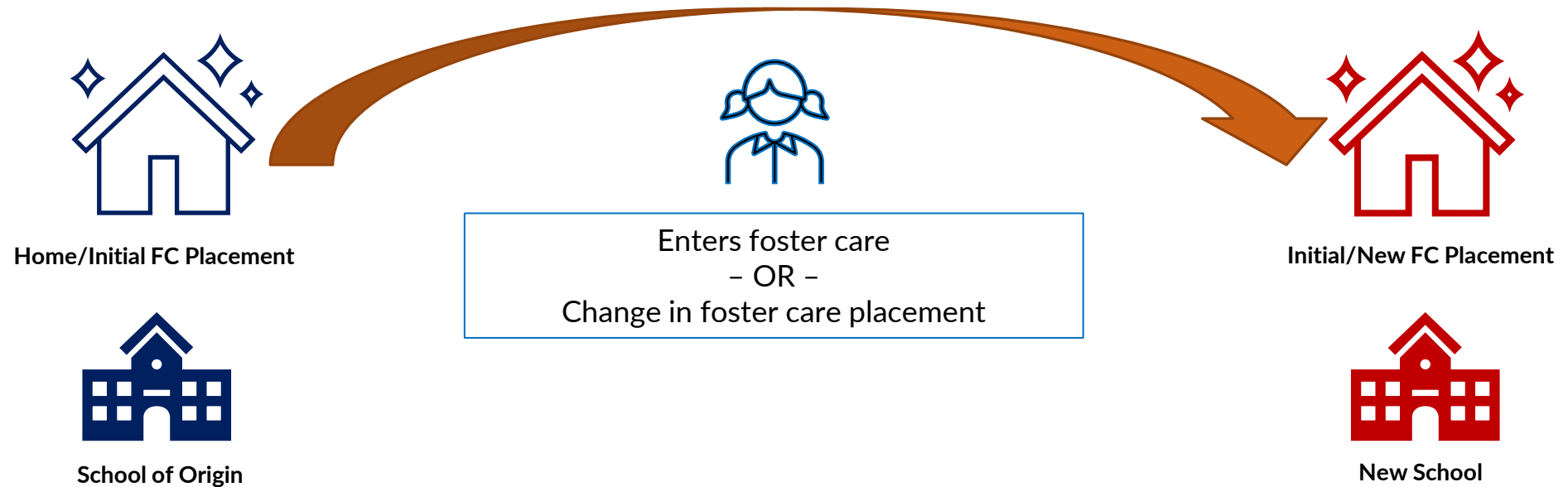
## School of Origin Definition

The school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care.

If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of the placement change.

# School of Origin

A child in foster care is to enroll or remain in the school of origin



## School of Origin

- The school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care, including preschool
- OR -
- The school in which the child is enrolled at the time of change in foster care placement

# Protect School of Origin Rights

## When a withdrawal is sought from school of origin...

- Caregivers may try to withdraw students in foster care without going through the BID process
- LEA registrar staff should not withdraw the student & notify the LEA Foster Care POC
- The LEA Foster Care POC should ensure that the student's school of origin rights are protected & that there is a BID conducted for the student
  - **students in foster care should remain in their school of origin throughout the BID process**



# BID First, Immediate Enrollment Second

If the school of origin is not in the **best interest** of the student, they should be **immediately enrolled** into a new school.

*“(ii) when a determination is made that it is not in such child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child is immediately enrolled in a new school, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment;” --*

[1111\(g\)\(1\)\(E\)\(ii\)](#)



# Best Interest Determinations

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# BID Definition

## Best Interest Determination

A holistic assessment to determine whether the **child in foster care** should **remain** in their **school of origin**, or if it is **not in the best interest** to remain in the school of origin, to ensure the student is **immediately enrolled** in the new school.

It is important to note that the cost of transportation should not be considered in the BID.

**The student should remain at the school of origin during the BID process.**

## Purpose of the BID

The BID is to specifically assess if it is in the **best interest of the child in foster care to remain at their school of origin**

The BID should NOT be viewed as a choice between the school of origin & the new school

**CHILDREN SHOULD CONTINUE  
ATTENDING THE SCHOOL OF  
ORIGIN DURING THE BID  
PROCESS**

# Question

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What should be considered in determining if remaining at the school of origin is in the best interest of a child in foster care?

# Factors of a BID

- Projected duration of out-of-home placement.
- Child's academic, developmental, & socialization needs.
- How a school change will affect learning or credit attainment.
- Safety of the child.
- Wishes of parent, caregiver, & child.
- Toll of commute, distance, and time of travel to/from school.

\*Taken from the Department of Child Safety Open Discussion on ESSA Foster Care PowerPoint

# BID Prep Form

## School of Origin BID Preparation Form

Date: [Click or tap to enter a date.](#)

### Local Educational Agency (LEA) Information

LEA Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Site: \_\_\_\_\_

LEA Foster Care Point of Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Child in Foster Care Information

Child Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ State Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of FC Move: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Residence School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### School of Origin Input for BID

- **How well connected is the child to the school and/or school staff?**  
*(i.e., how long attending the school, positive relationships with school staff, any sense of belonging or fitting in, etc.)*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- **How is the child performing academically?**  
*(i.e., passing/failing classes, reading/writing/math at grade level, etc.)*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

## When to do a BID?

The BID process should be executed every time a child either

- enters foster care
- changes their foster care living arrangement
  
- The BID process should be completed within 5 days & may be conducted via a virtual meeting, conference call, email correspondence, etc.



## Required

### Required Participants

- Child welfare agency
- School of origin
  
- The child welfare agency should be considered the **final decision maker** if there is not consensus & should lead the BID process.

# Ameliorating

## Ameliorating Participants

- Potential new school
- Foster caregiver
- Child in foster care
- Bio or adoptive parents
- Surrogate parent
- CASA
- SEA foster care point of contact



# Transportation

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## Prompt & Cost-Effective

Transportation to school of origin is prompt & cost-effective. The LEA & the child welfare agency share the responsibility.

*“(i) ensure that children in foster care needing transportation to the school of origin will promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 675(4)(A)); and” --1112(c)(5)(B)(i)*



# Immediate Enrollment

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## New School

A child in foster care should be **immediately enrolled** at their new school **AFTER** the **BID** has determined that it is not in the best interest for the child to remain at their school of origin.

The **new school** should be provided with a completed **BID** form during the enrollment process & **seek the school records** from the previous school.

## Steps of Immediate Enrollment

# When there's a new student in foster care seeking enrollment...

- caregivers may try to enroll students in foster care without going through the BID process
- LEA registrar staff should notify their Foster Care POC
- the LEA POC will collaborate with the school of origin's Foster Care POC to ensure the following:
  - the student's school of origin rights are protected
  - that there is a BID conducted for the student
    - **students in foster care should remain in their school of origin throughout the BID process**



# Points of Contact

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# Points of Contact

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- LEA Points of Contact
- DCS Points of Contact
- Tribal Foster Care Points of Contact

“(5) **collaborate** with the State or local **child welfare agency** to—

“(A) designate a **point of contact** if the corresponding child welfare agency notifies the local educational agency, in writing, that the agency has designated an employee to serve as a point of contact for the local educational agency”

20 U.S.C. § 6312 (c)(5)(A)



# Roles & Responsibilities

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# Responsibilities of the LEA FC POC

**LEAs** are to designate a **Foster Care Point of Contact (POC)** to ensure school stability for students in foster care

## Responsibilities of the Foster Care POC:

- collaborate with the child welfare agency for BIDs, school stability, & transportation to the school of origin
- facilitate **records transfer**
- ensure that the new school **immediately enrolls** after the BID process
- **train school staff** on ESSA foster care school stability assurances

## Actions of the LEA FC POC

# The Foster Care POC will need to be able to:

- **initiate transportation** to the school of origin for a student in foster care
- **enroll students in foster care immediately**, if the outcome of the best interest determination was to not remain in the school of origin
- assist in the receiving/sending of **school records** for students in foster care
- access the **AzEDS FSTR – Student Foster Care Report**. They will need the ADE Connect role of Foster Care Liaison
- provide **professional development** for all LEA staff on the ESSA foster care school stability assurances



# Identification

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# Identifying Students in Foster Care

## Best practices to identify students in foster care

- the child welfare agency will provide the caregiver with paperwork to give to schools verifying the student's foster care status.
  - for DCS, this document is called a [Notice to Provider](#)

## Utilize the State Match within [Direct Certification](#) if the LEA is participating in the National School Lunch Program

- health and nutrition staff that access this report can filter out the students in foster care and **give those results to the Foster Care POC**
  - allowable through [PL 112-278 Sect. 2](#)

# Best Practice in Identification

## Best practices in identifying students in foster care:

Foster Care POC can run the [FSTR – Student Foster Care Report](#) in AzEDS

- the ADE Connect role titled Foster Care Liaison is needed to access this report
- the [LEA Entity Administrator](#) can assign this role.

Train all LEA staff to **notify the Foster Care POC** when they become aware of a child in foster care

Foster Care POC should **maintain their own spreadsheet** of the students in foster care & cross reference between all other data points



# Special Education

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# IDEA Parent

## IDEA Parent Succession

- Bio Parent
- Foster Parent
- Guardian Generally Authorized
- Individual Acting in Place
- Surrogate Parent

DCS may attend IEP meetings but may not sign IEPs, act as the IDEA Parent, or officially request an evaluation.



# Lasting Takeaway

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# Foster Care School Stability Steps

Student enters foster care or has a change in foster care placement

Student remains at the school of origin while the LEA & child welfare agency execute the BID process

**BID**

**BID Outcome: Stay in School of Origin**

LEA & child welfare agency collaborate on transportation

**BID Outcome: Do Not Stay in School of Origin**

The new school immediately enrolls the student, even without all paperwork.



**Foster Care Education**



# Closing & Next Steps

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# Feedback Survey & Certificates

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## Feedback survey

- Must complete survey to receive PL certificate in APLD Blackboard & receive credit for attending the mandatory training

## Recording and slides

- The recording & slides will be posted on ADE's [Foster Care webpage](#)

# Survey Link

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Foster Care Education: Basics  
2024-2025 Exit Survey



<https://forms.office.com/r/Wwss3waCWJ>

# Thank You!

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