



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

# Foster Care Education: Best Interest Determinations

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# Objectives

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- Review the Every Student Succeeds Act Title I, Part A foster care school stability assurances
- Better collaboration during the Best Interest Determination proces.



# Pre-Assessment

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# Pre-Assessment

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1. The school of origin is the school the child is enrolled at when entering foster care or if already in foster care, the school the child is enrolled at the time of a foster care placement change.
  - a. True
  - b. False

# Pre-Assessment

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2. Which school should a student in foster care attend during the Best Interest Determination process?
  - a. New school
  - b. School that the biological parents choose
  - c. School of origin
  - d. School that the student in foster care chooses

# Pre-Assessment

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- 3. The Best Interest Determination process should be executed when a student enters foster care or a student in foster care changes their foster care living arrangement.**
  - a. True
  - b. False

# Pre-Assessment

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4. Which party is responsible for transporting a student in foster care to their school of origin?
  - a. School of origin
  - b. New school
  - c. School of origin & new school splits responsibility
  - d. Child welfare agency
  - e. Foster caregiver
  - f. School of origin & child welfare agency share the responsibility

# Pre-Assessment

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- 5. The Best Interest Determination process should be led by the child welfare agency & be completed in 5 days.**
  - a. True
  - b. False





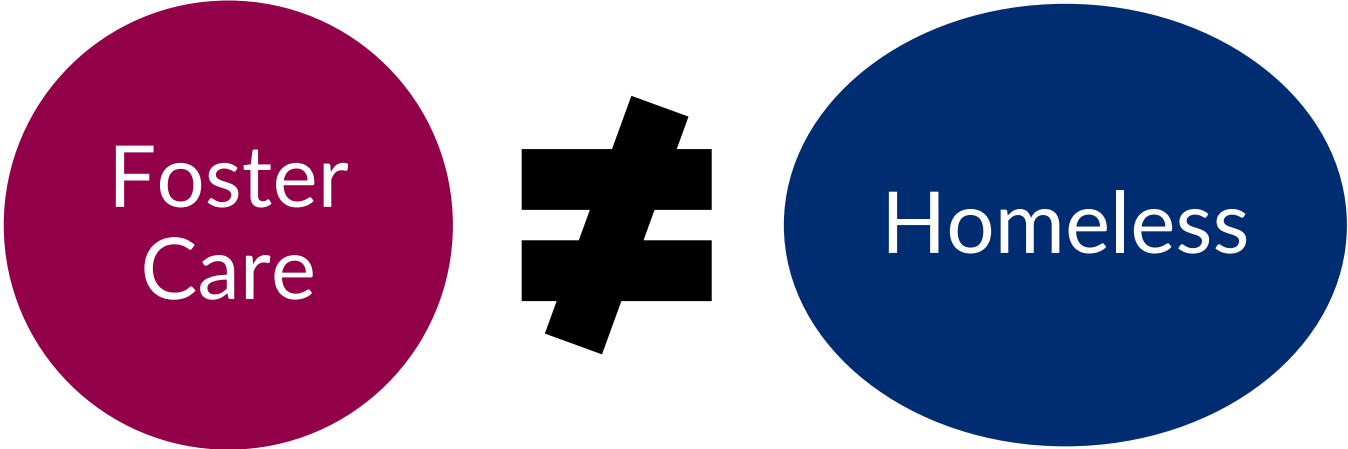
# Setting the Stage

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# Definition of Foster Care

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- Foster Care
- Away from parents
  - With child welfare agency



# Foster Care Definition Joint Letter

## Appendix A- Foster Care Scenarios

**Scenario A:** Student is brought to school by his grandmother who reports that DCS\* is assessing her son's home, and the student will be staying with her for the time being. Is this child in foster care? **No.** Children may temporarily stay with a responsible adult such as a relative or other responsible adult while a family is participating in an assessment\*\* if DCS agrees with the arrangement (typically for a period of up to two weeks for the purpose of DCS completing the assessment). School staff may wish to check in with DCS on the status of the assessment (i.e. to ensure nothing has changed, such as DCS taking custody).

**Scenario B:** Student is brought to school by his grandmother who reports DCS is working with her son, who will be released from jail in a couple of months. Her son has voluntarily agreed for his child to be in foster care for 90 days or less. She provides a Notice to Provider or "NTP." Is this child in foster care? **Yes.** The child is in DCS custody and placed with the grandmother through a temporary "Voluntary Foster Care" agreement.

**Scenario C:** Student is brought to school by his grandmother. She reports that her son is having some difficulty right now so her grandson is staying with her for a while. DCS is not involved. Is this child in foster care? **No.** DCS is not involved. The living arrangement is between the child's parent and grandparent.

**Scenario D:** Student is brought to school by his grandmother who reports that DCS and the court are involved and her son is not currently allowed any unsupervised contact. She provides a Notice to Provider or "NTP." Is this child in foster care? **Yes.** The grandmother has an NTP and DCS has been awarded placement care and responsibility by the court.

**Scenario E:** Student is brought to school by his grandmother who reports that DCS and the court are involved. DCS placed her grandchild with her and she has a Notice to Provider or "NTP." DCS has agreed that her son may also reside in her home, however he does not have custody and she supervises all contact between them. Is this child in foster care? **Yes.** DCS and the court are involved. DCS has custody and placed the child with the grandmother. The parent's presence in the home is not relevant to the custody of the child.

**Scenario F:** Student is brought to school by his grandmother. She provides paperwork showing that she has been awarded guardianship through her local county court but DCS is not involved. Is this child in foster care? **No.** The school may wish to verify with DCS whether or not they are involved. A person may be appointed as a permanent guardian through the dependency court process without ongoing involvement of DCS. A person may also petition their county court to obtain temporary guardianship of a minor child. It is always good to double check!

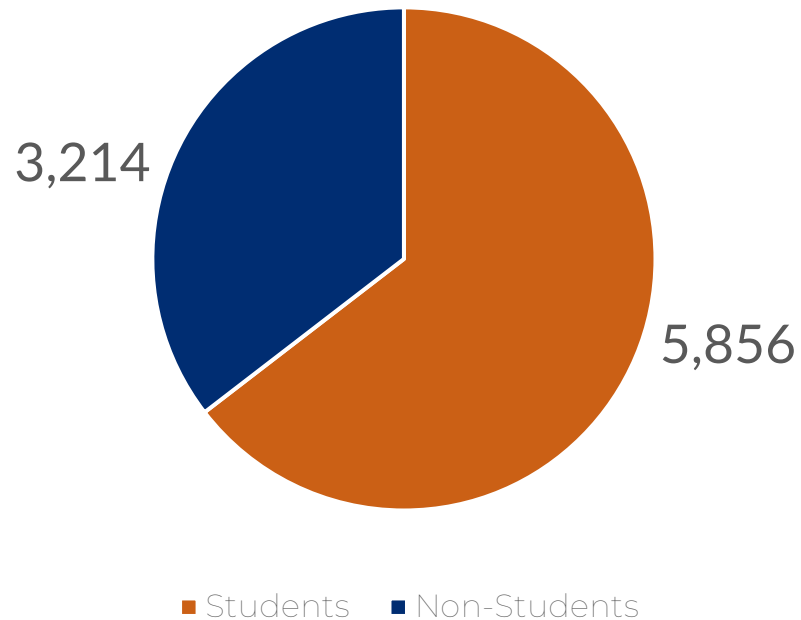
**Scenario G:** Student has turned age 18 and has been living in a foster home (or another foster care living arrangement). Is this student still in foster care? It depends. If the student signed a voluntary agreement to remain in the Extended Foster Care (EFC) program, then the student is still in foster care. If the student opted to have their DCS case closed, then the student is no longer in care. Students may reside in a foster home, group home, kinship home or be living on their own while in EFC. Please note that the federal guidance does recommend prioritizing school stability for students as they exit foster care. "For example, SEAs and LEAs should consider adopting policies that allow a child that exited foster care during the school year to continue in the school of origin through at least the end of the academic year, if appropriate."\*\*\*\*

**Scenario H:** Student has turned age 18 and is participating in DCS transitional living services. Is this student in foster care? **No.** The ADCS has "aftercare" services and support available to youth 18 and older who were in foster care at age 16 or older. (If you are unsure about the student's status, just call us and check!)

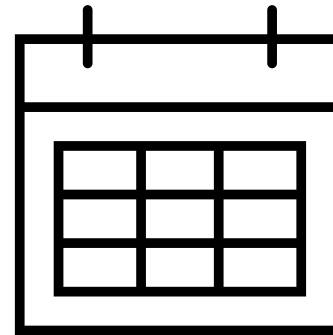
# Foster Care Data

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Children in Department of Child Safety  
(Total- 9,070)



## Foster Care Mobility



20,300 Moves a year  
55.58 Moves a day



2.20 Moves per child



# Quick Overview

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# School Stability

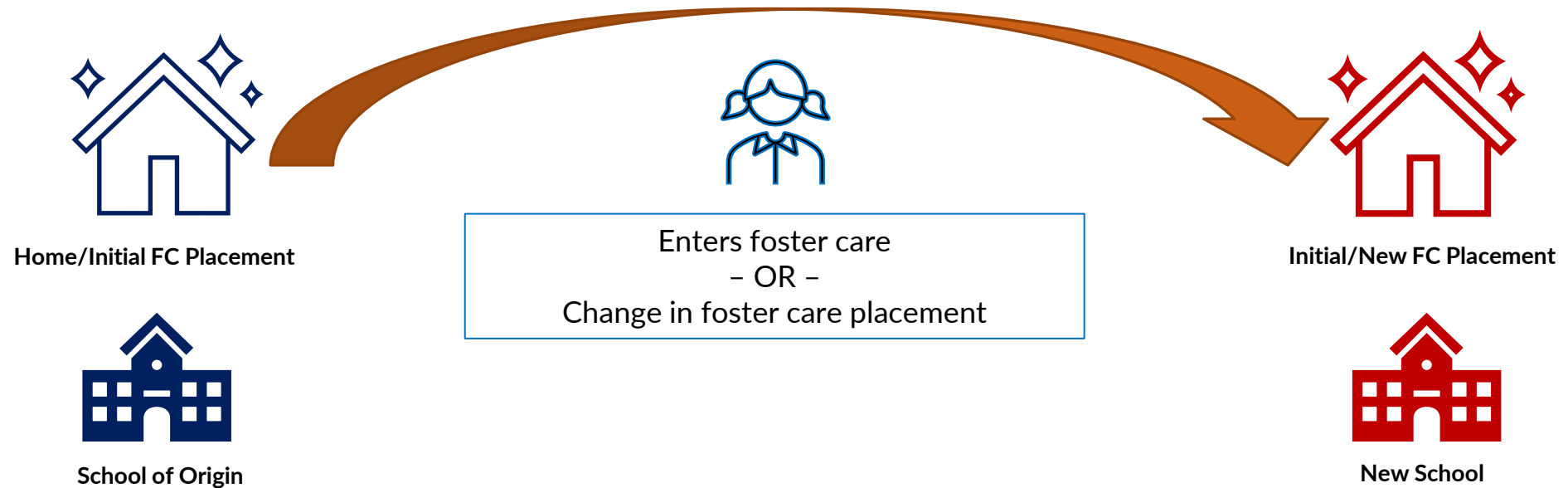
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**Children in foster remain in their school of origin.**

***“(i)... remains in such child’s school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in such child’s best interest;” -- 1111(g)(1)(E)(i)***

# 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

# Points of Contact

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Local  
Education  
Agency Points  
of Contact

Department of  
Child Safety 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...” --  
**1112(c)(5)**



# Best Interest Determination

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Should the student in foster care remain in their school of origin?

During the Best Interest Determination Process...  
**YES!**



# Transportation

## Shared Responsibility of Transportation.



***“(i)... transportation to the school of origin will promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner...” --***

**1112(c)(5)(B)(i)**

# Immediate Enrollment

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*“(ii)... not in such child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child is immediately enrolled in a new school...”* -- 1111(g)(1)(E)(ii)

# 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 Local Education Agency & child welfare agency execute the Best Interest Determination process

Best Interest Determination

Best Interest Determination Outcome: Stay in School of Origin

Best Interest Determination Outcome: Do Not Stay in School of Origin

Local Education Agency & child welfare agency collaborate on transportation

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



## Foster Care Education



# Prep for Best Interest Determination Process

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# Best Interest Determination 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.)*

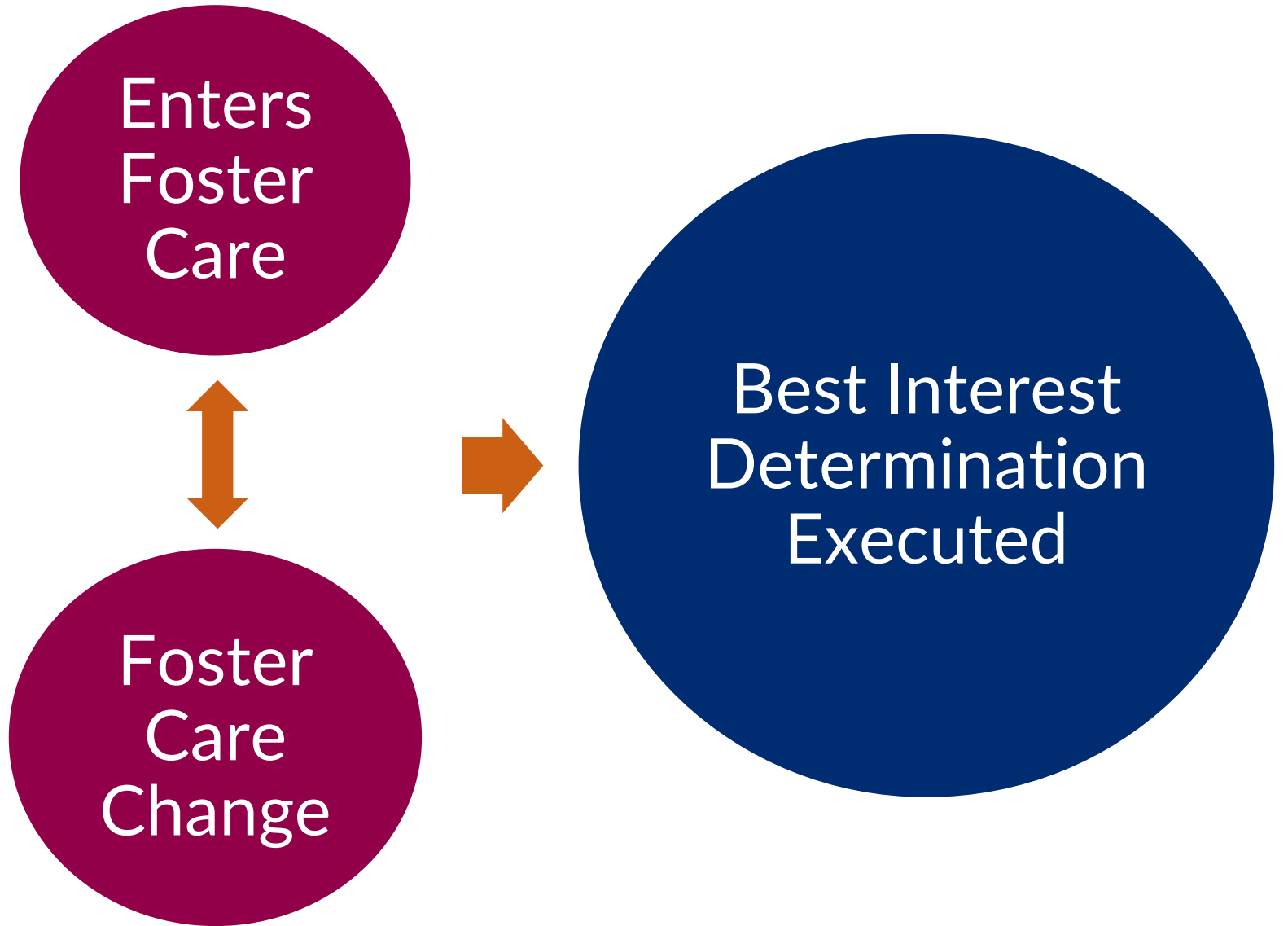
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# Best Interest Determinations

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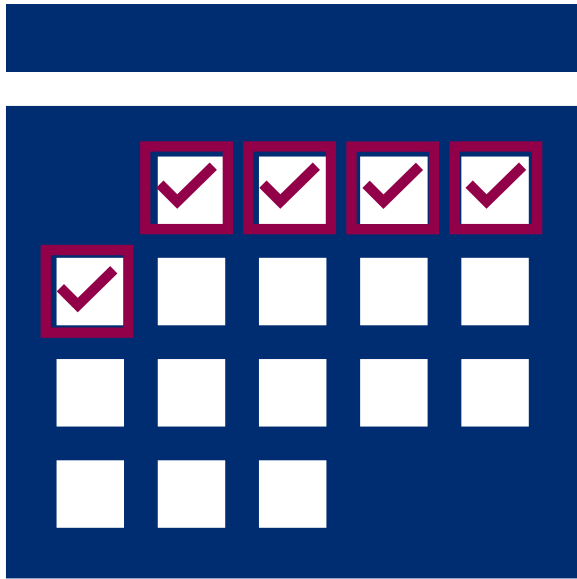
# When to do the Best Interest Determination Process?





# 5 Days for Best Interest Determination Process

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*“A. Within five days after a child enters foster care or if a child's placement changes... shall determine if it is in the child's **best interest** to remain in the child's **school of origin...**” --*  
ARS 8-530.04(A)

# Arbitration Process

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“A. The department of child safety and the department of education shall... prompt **resolution of disputes**

B. ... **ensure transportation** to the school of origin... until the dispute is resolved.

C. A decision... within **ten business days...**” -- [ARS 8-530.05](#)

# Department of Child Safety Best Interest Determination Meeting Table in Email

Student's Name / Parents' Name(s)	Student's Living Situation & Name		Potential Meeting Dates & Time
<b>Student:</b>  <b>Parent(s):</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster Family: <input type="checkbox"/> Kinship Family: <input type="checkbox"/> Group Home: <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
Current Enrollment & School Name	School & District of Origin	School & District of Residence	IEP/504
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes School Name: Grade:  <input type="checkbox"/> No Last School:			<input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> 504 <input type="checkbox"/> IDEA Parent (if different than parent):

# Department of Child Safety Best Interest Determination Process Document



## Instructions

The Every Student Succeeds Act/ESSA directs that youth experiencing foster care are to be maintained in their school of origin unless it is in the student's best interest to enroll in a new school. The school of origin is the school in which a student is enrolled at the time of entry into foster care. When the foster care living arrangement changes and the student (after a best interest determination is made) enrolls in a new school, the new school becomes the school of origin. Discuss and summarize the following topics with the student, parent, IDEA or surrogate parent (if assigned), school of origin, and caregiver. Discuss concerns and make efforts to reach consensus by the conclusion of the BID. Representatives from a proposed new school may be invited when circumstances indicate a higher potential for a change in school enrollment. Examples include when the student is entering or returning from an out-of-state living arrangement, entering a prospective permanent living arrangement, or exiting a juvenile justice or behavioral health setting. Note: Additional space available for comments on page four (4).

## Participants Invited

	<b>Attendance</b>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="text"/> Current School <input type="text"/> Grade <input type="text"/> School Address <input type="text"/>   <input type="text"/>   <input type="text"/> City   State   ZIP <input type="text"/> Date Entered the Home <input type="text"/> Meeting Date <p><i>*LEA Foster Care POC is the designated point of contact at the District or School level. Additional school staff (current or proposed school, including ESS staff as appropriate) may be listed as "Other."</i></p>
Student Name (Last, First, M.I.) *PLEASE PRINT*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
DCS Specialist	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
LEA Foster Care POC (School of Origin)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Parent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
IDEA Parent (if different from Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Current Caregiver   Relationship	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other (LEA Foster Care POC School of Residence)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

## Discussion

- 1 Living Arrangement:** Describe the permanency of the current living arrangement. (Include the anticipated length of stay, whether or not the caregivers are anticipated to be temporary or permanent, time to reunification or another permanency plan, etc. Provide the Notice to Provider form as needed.)
- 2 Student Input:** Describe the preference(s) of the student. Describe how the current school setting impacts the student's safety (physical environment, peer relationships, sibling connections, etc.), and how a change in school enrollment will better support safety.

# Best Interest Determination Participants

## REQUIRED

- Child Welfare Agency
- School of Origin

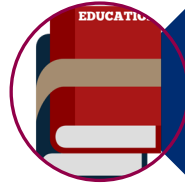
## AMELIORATING

- New School
- Surrogate
- Caregiver
- CASA
- Student
- Parents

# Factors of a Best Interest Determination



Foster Care Plan



Academics



School Credits



Safety



Student, Parent,  
Caregiver



Distance & Commute



# Unique Best Interest Determination Factors

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# Best Interest Determination Process – Canyon State Academy

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Canyon State Academy- Can they still attend their school of origin?

Placed by Department of Child Safety



Placed by delinquency court





# Best Interest Determination Process – Residential Treatment Center

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**Residential Treatment Center- What school is the school of origin?**

School attended before residential treatment center.

# Best Interest Determination Process – Level D Placement

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**Level D Placement/Private Day School- What school is the school of origin?**

Public school that placed the student.

# Best Interest Determination Process – No Arizona Public School

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**No Arizona Public School-** How is the Best Interest Determination executed?

School of origin



Immediately enroll at new school





# Withdrawal & New Enrollment

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# Withdrawal

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Caregiver tries to withdraw

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graph TD; A[Caregiver tries to withdraw] --> B[No withdrawal, notify point of contact]; B --> C[Best Interest Determination process];
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No withdrawal, notify point of contact

Best Interest Determination process

# New Enrollment

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Caregiver tries to enroll



Notify school of origin point of contact



Best Interest Determination process

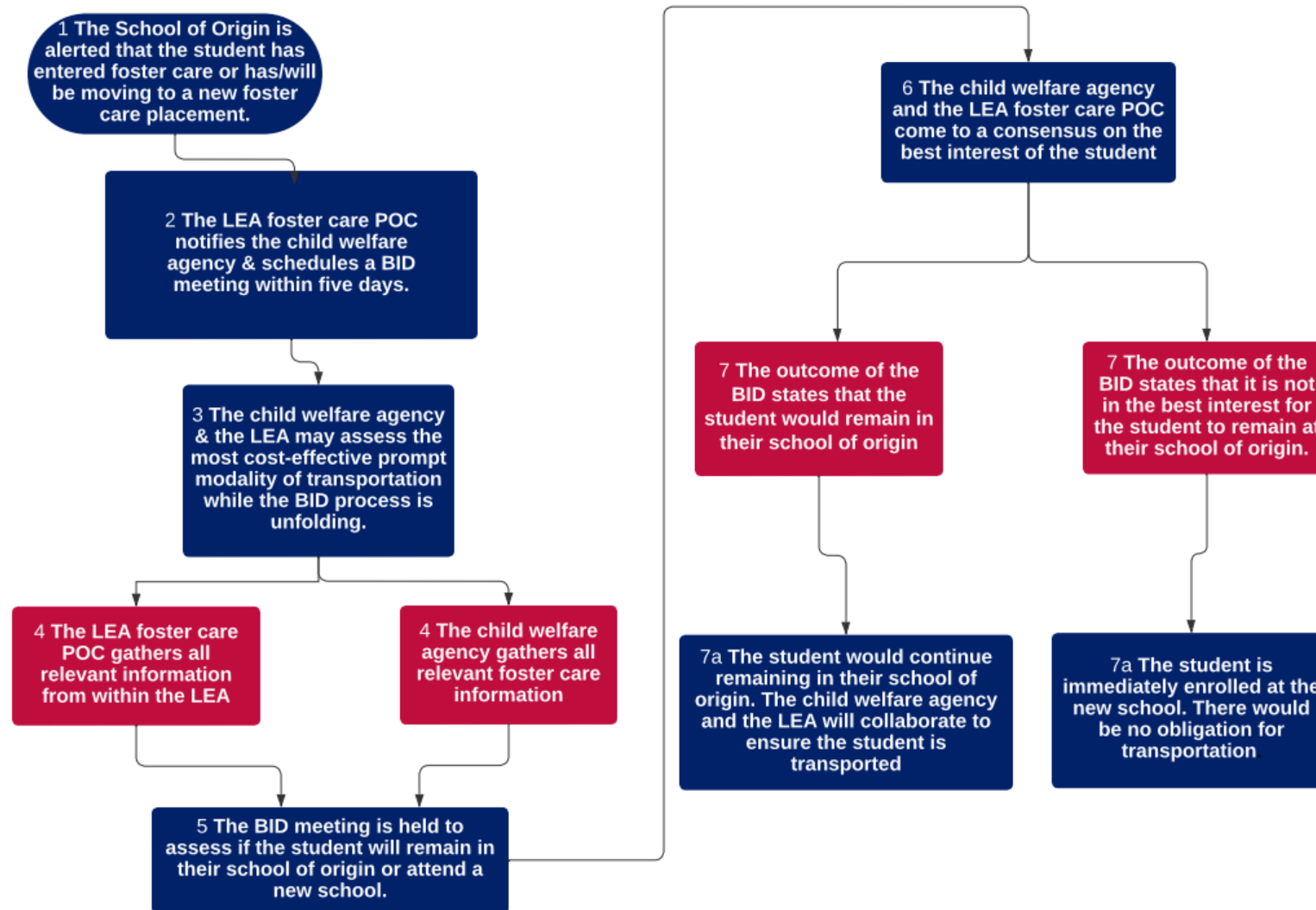


# Flowcharts

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# Best Interest Determination School of Origin

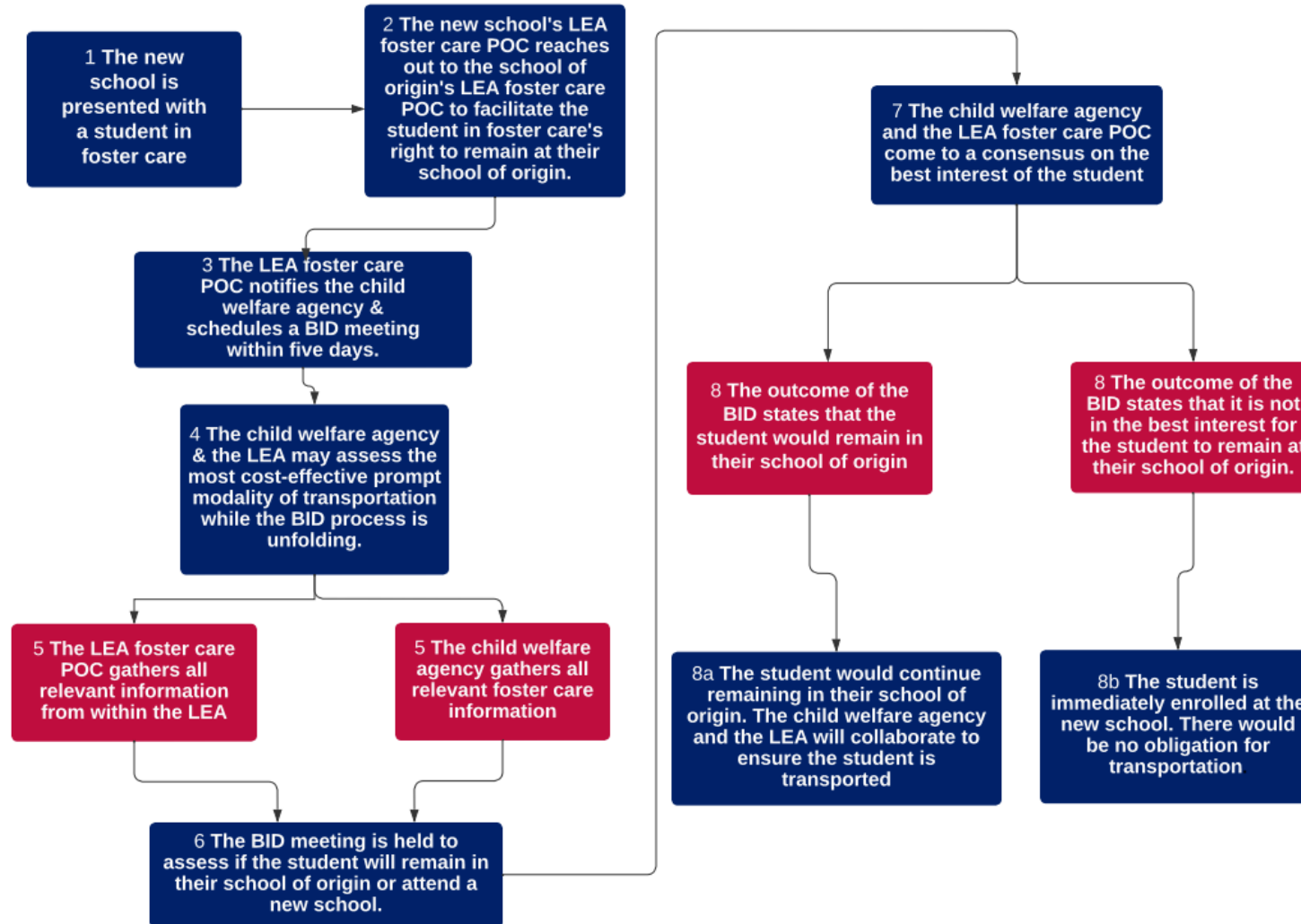
BID Flow Chart: School of Origin Initiation





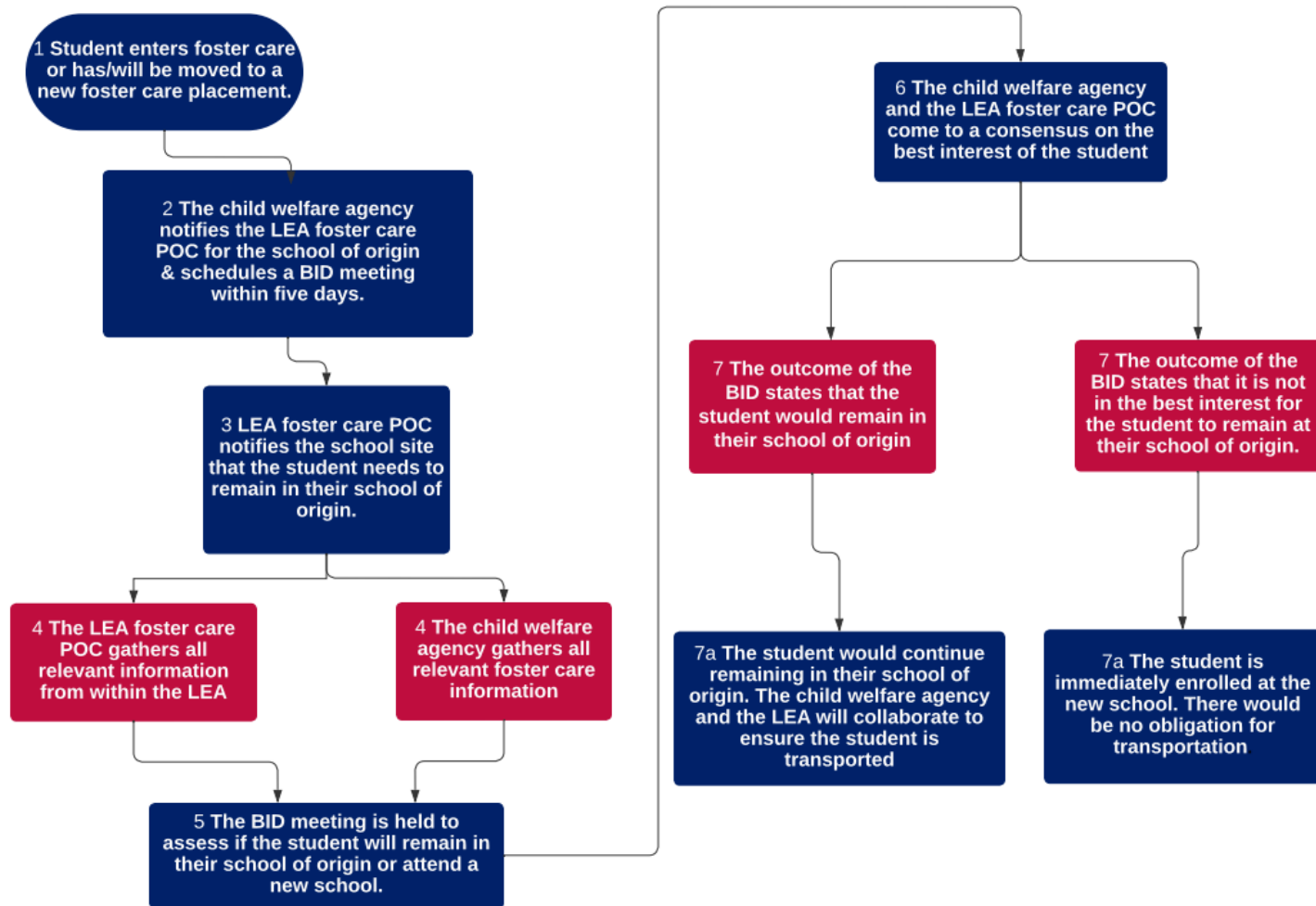
# Best Interest Determination New School

BID Flow Chart: New School Initiation



# Best Interest Determination Child Welfare Agency

BID Flow Chart: Child Welfare Agency Initiation





# Post-Assessment

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# Post-Assessment

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1. The school of origin is the school the child is enrolled at when entering foster care or if already in foster care, the school the child is enrolled at the time of a foster care placement change.
  - a. True
  - b. False

# Post-Assessment

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2. Which school should a student in foster care attend during the Best Interest Determination process?
  - a. New school
  - b. School that the biological parents choose
  - c. School of origin
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# Post-Assessment

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- 3. The Best Interest Determination process should be executed when a student enters foster care or a student in foster care changes their foster care living arrangement.**
  - a. True
  - b. False

# Post-Assessment

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4. Which party is responsible for transporting a student in foster care to their school of origin?
  - a. School of origin
  - b. New school
  - c. School of origin & new school splits responsibility
  - d. Child welfare agency
  - e. Foster caregiver
  - f. School of origin & child welfare agency share the responsibility

# Post-Assessment

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- 5. The Best Interest Determination process should be led by the child welfare agency & be completed in 5 days.**
  - a. True
  - b. False





# Closing & Next Steps

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# Feedback Survey & Certificates

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## Feedback survey

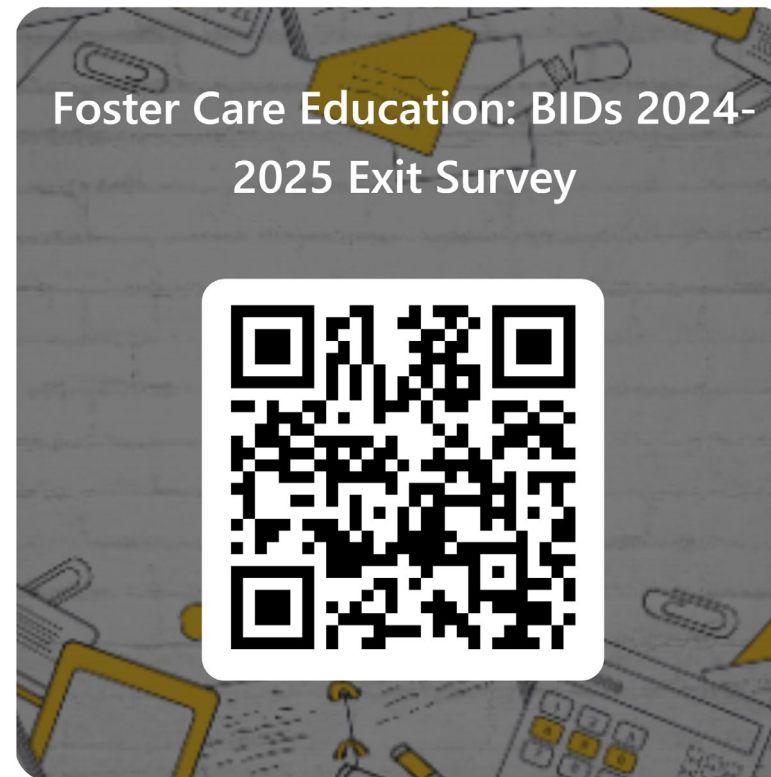
- Must complete survey to receive professional learning certificate in Arizona Department of Education Professional Learning and Development Blackboard & receive credit for attending the mandatory training

## Recording and slides

- The recording & slides will be posted on Arizona Department of Education's [Foster Care webpage](#)

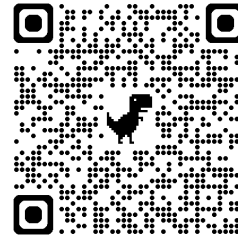
# Survey Link

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<https://forms.office.com/r/TpA1Hm2eQt>

# Upcoming Trainings



Oct. 24, 2024 *Maricopa County Foster Care Education Collaborative* 02:00 PM - 03:00 PM

Oct. 30, 2024  
*McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison & Foster Care Points of Contact Convening on Transportation*  
AM (Maricopa Only) 09:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Oct. 30, 2024  
*McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison & Foster Care Points of Contact Convening on Transportation*  
PM (Maricopa Only) 01:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Nov. 6, 2024  
*McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison & Foster Care Points of Contact Convening on Transportation*  
AM (Maricopa Only) 09:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Nov. 6, 2024  
*McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison & Foster Care Points of Contact Convening on Transportation*  
PM (Maricopa Only) 01:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Nov. 12, 2024  
*Foster Care Education: Basics* 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Dec. 17, 2024  
*Foster Care Education: Post-Secondary Supports* 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

# Questions

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# Thank You!

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