

CHEROKEE IMMERSION CHARTER SCHOOL FOSTER CARE PLAN

Introduction and Background

Children in foster care often and inadvertently change school, which along with enrollment delays and record transfers can have a significant disruptive impact on their academic progress. Studies have shown that children in foster care face an increased risk of grade retention, gaps in academic achievement, low high school graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment.

Recognizing these adverse educational outcomes, the foster care provisions under Title I of ESSA require State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) to ensure educational stability and to minimize educational disruptions for children in foster care.

Among other things, the educational stability includes assurances that (1) a child in foster care will remain in the child's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school, and (2) if a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will immediately be enrolled in the school of residence, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. These will help ensure that children in foster care experience minimal disruption to their education during moves or placement changes.

The Superintendent will designate a Point of Contact (POC) to coordinate activities relating to the District's provision of services to children placed in foster care, including transportation services.

DEFINITIONS

"Foster Care" means 24-hour care and supportive services provided to children placed away from their parents, guardians, or person exercising custodial control or supervision and for whom the foster parent has placement care and responsibility.

"School of origin" means the school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care.

"Best Interest" means a case -by-case determination of the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity of placement as required by ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i). Factors be utilized in this determination include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

1. Safety considerations;
 2. Proximity of the resource family home to the child's present school;
 3. Age and grade level of the child as it relates to the other best interests factors;
 4. Needs of the child, including social adjustment and well-being;
 5. Child's performance, continuity of education and engagement in the school the child presently attends;
 6. Child's special education programming if the child is classified;
 7. Point of time in the school year;
 8. Child's permanency goal and likelihood of reunification;
 9. Anticipated duration of the placement;
 10. Preferences of the child;
 11. Preferences of the child's parent(s) or education decision maker(s)
 12. The child's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers;
 13. Placement of the child's sibling(s);
 14. Influence of the school climate on the child, including safety;
 15. Availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socio-emotional needs;
 16. History of school transfers and how they have impacted the child;
 17. How the length of the commute would impact the child, based on the child's developmental stage;
 18. Whether the child is a student with a disability under the IDEA who is receiving special education and related services or a student with a disability under Section 504 who is receiving special education or related aids and services and, if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin; and
 19. Whether the child is an EL and is receiving language services, and, if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin, consistent with Title VI and the EEOA.
- Documentation of Best Interest of the child will be on the Best Interest Determination Form.
 - In the event of emergency circumstances, OKDHS has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding school placement, and then consult with the School POC to re-visit the Best Interest Determination.

The school district administration shall attempt to remove existing barriers to school attendance by children in foster care:

1. Enrollment requirements that may constitute a barrier to the education of a child in foster care or the homeless child or youth shall be waived. If the district is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize other reasonable means to determine the appropriate grade level for the child.

2. Fees and charges that may present a barrier to the enrollment or transfer of a child in foster care or a homeless child or youth shall be waived.
3. Customary transportation policies and regulations shall be waived.
4. Official school records policies and regulations shall be waived.
5. The district shall make a reasonable effort to locate immunization records from information available or shall arrange for students to receive immunizations through health agencies and at district expense if no other recourse is available. Immunizations may, however, be waived for homeless youth only in accordance with provisions of board policy on immunizations.
6. Other barriers to school attendance by a child in foster care or a homeless youth shall be waived

Disputes

If there is a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the CWA (OKDHS) should be considered the final decision maker in 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 in the case plan.

Student Records

Cherokee Immersion Charter School will share educational records with CWAs that are allowed under FERPA. This allows educational agencies to disclose without parent consent to educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to State and Tribal agencies. This also allows distribution of records without consent of a parent to Law Enforcement and CWAs for the investigation of child abuse or neglect, even if the student is not in foster care.

Transportation

The District will collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) when transportation is required for children placed in foster care to attend the school of origin outside their usual attendance area or the district when in the best interest of the student. Under the supervision of the Superintendent/designee, the District POC will invite appropriate District officials, CWAs, and officials from other districts or agencies to consider how such transportation is to be promptly arranged and funded in a cost effective manner.