

ENSURING THE EDUCATIONAL STABILITY OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE (FOSTER CARE)

The Evansville Community School District will collaborate with county child welfare agencies in meeting the educational and other needs of children in foster care. “Foster care” is defined as out-of-home care including, but not limited to, placement in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and preadoptive homes. Children awaiting foster care placement are also covered under the Title 1 definition of “foster care”.

Children in foster care shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children in the District. They shall be provided the services and have access to the programs and activities that are offered to other children attending schools in the District, including educational services for which the children meet eligibility criteria (e.g. special education, Title 1 programming, programs and services for English learners, and advanced learners etc.), career and technical education programs, and school nutrition programs.

The Director of Student Services has primary administrative-level oversight of the District’s services for children who are in foster care. The Director, or a qualified administrative-level designee, shall be responsible for providing any required assurances to applicable state and federal agencies that the District is complying with applicable state and federal requirements related to ensuring the educational stability of children in foster care as well as reasonably monitoring compliance with such assurances.

The Director of Student Services shall serve as the District’s primary point of contact for the education of children in foster care and will be the primary liaison for the representatives of child welfare agencies who also have responsibility for ensuring the educational stability of children in foster care. The Director of Student Services will work with administrators and other District personnel to periodically review existing policies, procedures, practices, and data to identify and develop proposals to remedy and remove barriers that children in foster care may face in the school enrollment and admission processes, in regularly attending school, in accessing applicable support services, in accessing academic programs, academic activities, or extracurricular activities, or in receiving appropriate credit for prior academic work.

The Director of Student Services will also:

1. Coordinate with the points of contact and other appropriate representatives of child welfare agencies and of other educational agencies on the implementation of the Title 1 provisions related to ensuring the educational stability of children in foster care.
2. Assist appropriate child welfare agency representatives in making “best interest of the child” education decisions, including particularly the determination of whether or not it is in the child’s best interest to remain in their school of origin or to enroll in a new school. As examples, the Director of Student Services may:
 - a. Be involved in defining a process for making such decisions.
 - b. Coordinate input from, or other participation by, other District staff.

- c. Make, or assist in making, the District's evaluation of the available and relevant information in the specific care. The determination of a child's best interest in relation to school enrollment involves giving consideration to all factors relating to a child's best interest, including but not limited to the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity of the child's placement to the school.
3. Facilitate the continued enrollment of a child in foster care in their school of origin, or, if remaining in the school of origin is determined not to be in the child's best interest, facilitate the child's immediate enrollment in a new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.
 4. Request, facilitate, and confirm, as applicable, the timely transfer of student records any time a child in foster care will be enrolling in a school (within or outside of the District) other than the school the child is currently attending (or most recently attended).
 5. Coordinate the implementation of local transportation procedures related to children in foster care and resolution of any transportation cost disputes, in consultation with the Business Manager and in accordance with established procedures.
 6. Facilitate the sharing of student record information with child welfare agency personnel in a manner that is consistent with applicable legal requirements, any applicable record sharing agreements, and established District policies and procedures regarding the maintenance and confidentiality of student records.
 7. Have shared responsibility for ensuring that children in foster care attending schools in the District have access to and receive the educational services and supports and specialized programming for which they are eligible.

Legal Ref.: Sections 48.64(1r) Wisconsin State Statutes (Placement of Children in Out-of-Home Care)

48.78(2)(b) (Confidentiality of Records)

115.76(12) (Definitions)

118.125 (Pupil Records)

118.51(3m) (Full-Time Open Enrollment)

121.55 (Methods of Providing Transportation)

121.555 (Alternative Methods of Providing Transportation)

Title 1 of the ESEA

PI 13

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

Local Ref.: Policy #411 – Equal Educational Opportunities