

Baldwyn School District



Foster Care Plan 2021-2022

EDUCATIONAL **STABILITY** *for* CHILDREN *in*
FOSTER CARE

Baldwyn School District

Foster Care Plan

Purpose

The purpose of the document is to outline the procedures used in the Baldwyn School District for enrolling and withdrawing children who have been placed under the care of Mississippi Child Protective Services.

Mission

The mission of the Baldwyn School District is to focus the energies of our schools, community, and parents on successfully educating all students so that they will become productive citizens in a rapidly changing and global society.

The 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was enacted to support and promote school stability and success for students in foster care while collaborating with child welfare partners. This law presents an important step forward, but state and local implementation are essential to ensure adequate protections for students in foster care.

LEA Point of Contact and Responsibilities

The superintendent will assign at least one person to serve as a Foster Care Child

Liaison, or Point of Contact (POC). The name of this person will be turned in annual to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). If additional staff members are needed to meet the requirements, the district will make assignments as deemed necessary. The Point of Contact will work in the best interest of the child to ensure that all educational requirements are being met. The POC that is assigned to the position will have access to available trainings and materials to keep them informed of any changes in

the Foster Care Regulations. The POC will work closely with state and tribal child welfare agencies to:

- Coordinating with the corresponding child welfare agency,
- Leading the development of a process for making the best interest
- Documenting the best interest determination,
- Facilitating the transfer of records and immediate enrollment,
- Facilitating data sharing with the child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA and other privacy protocols,
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures,
- Managing best interest determinations and transportation cost disputes,
- Ensuring that children in foster care are enrolled in and regularly attending school
- Providing professional development and training to school staff on the Title I provision and educational needs of children in foster care.

Decision-Making Process

A committee will meet to determine the appropriate placement of each foster care child. The committee will be comprised of the building administrator or representative, the LEA's POC, and a member of the Child Protective Services (CPS). In emergency circumstances, CPS has the authority to make an immediate decision regarding the school placement, and then consult with the LEA and revisit the best interest determination of the child.

Enrollment of a Foster Child

Per Mississippi Department of Education and Child Protective Services guidelines, **only** a Child Protective Services (CPS) representative may enroll or withdraw a foster child.

The district POC must be contacted immediately for enrollment and withdrawal of child in foster care, and a Best Interest Determination (BID) must be held with the CPS Case Worker upon enrollment and withdrawal.

Foster Care parents are not legal guardians; therefore, all educational documents and meeting notifications will be sent to the student's case worker. According to MDE, Foster Care parents may not enroll or withdraw children in foster care, may not receive copies of any educational records from the school, and will not be notified of meetings about the student. Case Workers, however, may invite Foster Parents to meetings as they deem appropriate.

We understand that all necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) may not be immediately available and we want to provide a smooth transition for the student into our district. We will contact the home school district for the records and make adaptations as needed. After enrollment, the following guardianship or legal custody documents shall be provided for verification by the foster family or CPS:

- Power of attorney
- Affidavit
- Court Order

Student Records

The Baldwin School District will share education records with CPS that are allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This allows educational agencies to disclose without parental consent educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to State and Tribal agencies.

Withdrawal of a Foster Child

CPS has the right to withdraw students assigned to them by a judicial authority. Baldwin School District is responsible for providing as many educational records as possible to make any transition from the school of origin to the new school a smooth transition. Records not on file in the school office shall be forwarded the new school within 24 hours following a request by the new school or CPS. Only the CPS worker can withdraw a foster care student, not the foster parents.

The POC shall contact CPS if he/she thinks it would be in the best interest for the child being withdrawn to remain in the school of origin. The CPS

representative will immediately contact the Regional Director of Child Protective Services to relay the concerns of the POC as well as possibly scheduling a time to discuss the child's educational placement.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, CPS should be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination. CPS is in the position to assess vital non-educational factors such as safety, sibling placements, the child's permanency goal, and other components of the case plan. They also have the authority, capacity, and responsibility to collaborate with and gain information from multiple parties including parents, children, schools, and the court in making these decisions.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster Care Parents or Child Protective Services should complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Form for the Baldwin School District. The form along with verification of foster care shall be submitted to the District POC who will provide these documents to the District Child Nutrition Director.

Transportation

Some children in foster care may need transportation to remain in their school of origin. Any child in foster care needing transportation to their school of origin must promptly receive transportation services. If the child remains in their school of origin and moves outside the current school's attendance zone, the Baldwin School District (BSD) must collaborate with the local CPS (Lee or Prentiss County Child Protective Services) to develop and implement clear written transportation procedures in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 299.13(c)(1)(ii). The two entities must establish a system that expedites transportation for children placed in foster care. The goal is to maintain educational stability for the student. There are various modes of transportation available for students. Examples of no-cost or low-cost options for transportation that the BSD and the CPS could explore include whether:

- CPS will arrange for the child to be dropped off at a school bus stop for the school of origin;
- CPS will arrange for the foster parent or other designee to transport the child to school (mileage reimbursable through foster care maintenance payments);
- CPS and the BSD will review pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the foster care placement that cross district boundaries, such as transportation for homeless students as required by the McKinney-Vento Act;
- CPS and the BSD will determine if the child is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs;
- CPS and the BSD will address how the child welfare agency will use foster care maintenance payments and administrative funds to pay for transportation to the school;
- CPS and the BSD will specify how “additional costs” of transportation will be calculated, to delineate clearly the district’s responsibility to provide transportation when there are no additional costs;
- CPS and the BSD will specifically describe how transportation to the school of origin will be provided in situations where there are no additional costs;
- CPS and the BSD will specify the timing and procedures for the child welfare agency to reimburse the district for transportation costs.

In the event of a dispute between the district and CPS concerning the cost of transportation, the two entities must consider what is in the best interest of the student. If the disagreement continues, the cost will be divided equally between the district and CPS. The dispute shall be brought before the state appointed POCs (MDE and Current Director, MDCPS). Current transportation expenses shall remain in effect until a decision is rendered to maintain the student’s status quo.

Raymond Craven

Superintendent (Typed Name and Signature)

Date

Christin Magers

LEA Board President (Typed Name and Signature)

Date

Rhonda Crump

Foster Care POC (Typed Name and Signature)

Date

Board Approved on:
