

# BelovED Community Charter School

## Foster Care and Educational Stability

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The board recognizes that children placed in foster care, including resource family homes or other out-of-home placements, have special needs. The board is committed to ensuring cooperation and collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) to minimize further disruptions in the lives of these children and promote their educational stability. Accordingly, the Executive Officer/Lead Person is directed to ensure that a School Social Worker is assigned responsibility for developing an effective partnership with child welfare officials to support the educational needs of children in foster care, as per the following.

### Definition of Foster Care

Foster care means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes. Out-of-home placement is a temporary placement for a child, made by a State agency (Child Protection and Permanency) or State authorized agency (Youth Case Management/YCM, Care Management Organization/CMO or Unified Care Management), in a group home category placement or resource family home, where care of the child is deemed necessary to protect the child's safety and well-being.

### Roles and Responsibilities Under This Policy

- A. The Executive Officer/Lead Person shall designate and ensure a School Social Worker is in ongoing communication and collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to support the following goals:
  1. Children in foster care remain in their current school when it is determined that it is in their best interest, and to the extent feasible and appropriate, the children remain in their current school while this determination is being made by DCF;
  2. Children in foster enter school ready to learn;
  3. Children in foster receive supports and services to participate in all aspects of school and to prevent school dropout, truancy, and disciplinary actions;
  4. Children in foster are engaged in their education, are empowered to advocate for their educational needs and pursuits, and receive supports and services to ensure a successful transition into adulthood;

5. Children in foster with disabilities are located, identified and evaluated for eligibility for special education and section 504 services and, if eligible, shall receive services in accordance with their IEP or section 504 plan;
  6. DCF and the district collaborate to support and improve the well-being of Children in foster.
- B. The designated School Social Worker shall act as the primary contact person between the school and child welfare authorities with regard to general information sharing, the development of mutual training and other cooperative efforts (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11.1(a)6), and shall:
1. Facilitate school registration, placement, educational planning, support services, collaboration and problem resolution that may include but are not limited to:
    - a. Healthcare planning (see policies 5141 Student Health and 5141.21 Administration of Medication);
    - b. Child study team referral and assessment;
    - c. Intervention and referral services as necessary and appropriate;
    - d. Ensuring continuity of individualized education program (IEP) as appropriate;
  2. Coordinate with DCF Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) to provide the required training of school district employees, volunteers and interns (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11.1(a)8).
- C. DCF Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) employees shall have access to student records, including those that are relevant to current and ongoing child welfare investigations. It is not required to have the written consent of the parent or adult student, or a court order, to release student records to DCP&P or other representatives of a State or local child welfare agency pursuant to P.L. 112-278, S.2, the Uninterrupted Scholars Act;

#### District of Residence and Tuition

The district of residence is responsible for continuing to educate a child within its own district or paying tuition for a child attending school in another district, and for providing for any needed transportation. Five school days after the best interest determination has been made, the district of residence must make transportation arrangements for the child. The district of residence shall bear the cost of providing the transportation.

#### A. Placement in a resource family home:

1. If a child was placed in a resource family home prior to September 9, 2010, the district of residence shall be the district in which the resource family parents reside. If such a child in a resource family home is subsequently placed in a State facility or by a State agency, the district of residence of the child shall then be determined as if no such resource family placement had occurred;
2. If a child was or is placed in a resource family home on or after September 9, 2010, the district of residence shall be the present district of residence of the parent or guardian with whom the child lived prior to the most recent placement in a resource family home.

#### B. Placement in residential State facilities

When a child is placed in a residential State facility, or has been placed by State agencies in a group home, skill development home, private school or out-of-State facility, the district of residence shall be the present district of residence of the parent or guardian with whom the child lived prior to his most recent admission to a State facility or most recent placement by a State agency.

If the district of residence cannot be determined, or if the criteria identify a district of residence outside of the State, or if the child has resided in a domestic violence shelter or transitional living facility located outside of the district of residence for more than one year, the State shall assume fiscal responsibility for the tuition of the child (N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12).

### Transportation

- A. Transportation for students living in group homes shall be the responsibility of the resident district board of education as detailed above and according to law (N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12);
- B. Transportation for students placed in a resource family home on or prior to September 9, 2010 shall be the responsibility of the resident district board of education in which the resource family home is located and shall follow the requirements of law (N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 et seq.) and board policy 3541.1 Transportation Routes and Safety.
- C. For students removed from the custody of their parent or legal guardian and placed in a resource family home or moved from placement in one resource family home to another after September 9, 2010:
  - 1. The school district of residence for the student is the school district in which the student's parent or legal guardian was living at the time of the student's placement;
  - 2. When a student is placed in a resource family home that is located within the student's school district of residence, the school district of residence shall provide transportation services; and
  - 3. When a student is placed in a resource family home that is located outside of the student's school district of residence, the school district in which the resource family home is located shall arrange for transportation services in consultation with the school district of residence. The school district of residence shall be responsible for the cost of transportation.

### Transferring Student Records

When a child is placed in foster care including a resource family home or other out-of-home placement and newly enrolls in the district, the designated School Social Worker shall immediately contact the school of origin to obtain relevant academic and other records. The request for records shall be submitted in writing within 10 school days of enrollment. The Designated School Social Worker shall also ensure records of students who are required to transfer to another school district as a result of foster placement, are transferred expeditiously and in accordance with law (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-7.5) and board regulations.

### Implementation

The designated School Social Worker shall oversee the development of procedures for collaboration with DCP&P and tuition reimbursement to avoid barriers to immediate enrollment.

Adopted by BelovED Community School Board on:

Date: April 28, 2022