

Piedmont Public Schools



Foster Care Plan

Revised 2018

Federal Law and Guidance

Under the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1112(c)(5)(B), Title I educational stability, provisions take effect on December 10, 2016. By such date, each school district shall have a Foster Care Plan developed and disseminated to all stakeholders.

In Section 1111(c)(5) of ESSA, the school district must collaborate with the Child Welfare Agency and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies (CWA) to implement the Title I educational stability provisions. Therefore, each school district shall develop a clear, written Foster Care Plan. As such, the Foster Care Plan for Piedmont Public Schools shall be as follows:

LEA Point of Contact and Responsibilities

Dr. Courtney Lockridge, PPS Foster Care Contact

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Under the requirements of ESSA, Section 1112(c)(5)(A), Piedmont Public Schools will designate a point of contact to collaborate with Child Welfare Agency to insure the appropriate school placement of children in foster care. The roles and responsibilities of the POC for Piedmont Public Schools will include:

- Coordinating with the corresponding Child Welfare Agency POC on the implementation of the Title I provisions;
- Leading the development of a process for making the best interest determination
- 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 provisions and educational needs of children in foster care as needed.

Notification and Enrollment

The district administration shall follow the guidelines set by the OSDE to provide educational stability for children in foster care. OSDE provides the following guidelines and steps to be taken by the appropriate agency:

- Child Welfare Agency notifies Piedmont's Foster Care Representative regarding which students are in foster care;
- Child Welfare Agency informs Piedmont's Foster Care Representative about a child placement away from parents or guardians and for whom the Child Welfare Agency has placement and care responsibility. The Child Welfare Agency must start collaboration and consultation with Piedmont's Foster Care Representative within 72 hours;
- Such child enrolls or remains in the school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to attend the school of origin. Piedmont's Foster Care Representative and Child Welfare Agency should consult and make a joint determination in regard to the best interest of the child. In the event of emergency circumstances, the Child Welfare Agency 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.

Transportation costs should not be considered when determining a child's best interest, which is consistent with the program instruction released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- If there is disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the Child Welfare Agency should be considered the final decision maker in making the best interest determination (unless State law or policy dictates otherwise). The Child Welfare Agency is uniquely positioned to assess vital non-educational factors such as safety, sibling placements, the child's permanency goal and other components of the case plan. The Child Welfare Agency also has 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.

- Piedmont's Foster Care Representative will collaborate with the Child Welfare Agency to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation is

provided to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, when in their best interest; Child Welfare Agency receives funds under Title IV-E, and some of these funds may support the transportation costs to maintain the child in the school of origin. Therefore, Child Welfare Agency must ensure that transportation is provided when needed, and will be the agency mainly responsible for paying the transportation costs within the first 72 hours. Foster care parents may agree to provide and pay for the transportation to the school of origin, but if this is not an option, the LEA shall ensure transportation for the foster care children is provided, and reach an agreement with Child Welfare Agency in regards to covering the transportation costs as outlined by ESSA. LEA and Child Welfare Agency should aim to reach an agreement in regard to how the transportation will be provided, arranged and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care.

ESSA, Section 1112(5)(B) stipulates:

“If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin, the local educational agency will provide transportation to the school of origin if—

- the local Child Welfare Agency agrees to reimburse the local educational agency for the cost of such transportation;
- the local educational agency agrees to pay for the cost of such transportation; or
- the local educational agency and the local Child Welfare Agency agree to share the cost of such transportation”;
- When a determination is made that it is not in such child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child is immediately enrolled in the school of residence by the child's foster parent or caseworker. To prevent educational discontinuity, ESSA, Section 1111(g)(1)(E) stipulates that enrollment must not be denied or delayed for children in foster care because documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided;
- During the enrollment process, the following shall occur:
 - a) The caseworker notifies both schools within one (1) business day of making the decision and sends the required documents to both schools within two (2) business days of making the decision.
 - b) The receiving school shall immediately contact the school last attended by any such child to obtain relevant academic and other records.

The school of origin is required to transfer non-essential records to the receiving school within three (3) business days of receiving notice from the Child Welfare Agency that the child will be changing.

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

- Enrollment requirements that may constitute a barrier to the education of the foster child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent. 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.
- Fees and charges that may present a barrier to the enrollment or transfer of a foster child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent.
- Customary transportation policies and regulations may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent.
- Official school records policies and regulations may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent.
- 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 foster youth only in accordance with provisions of board policy on immunizations. (See policy FFAB.)
- Other barriers to school attendance by foster youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent.

The district will provide to each foster child such school services that are comparable to services offered to other students in the district and that are determined to be in the child's best interest. Such services will include:

- Public preschool programs;
- Special education, Title I, and limited English proficiency programs for which they are eligible;
- Vocational education programs;
- Gifted and talented programs;
- Before and after school programs;
- School meal programs; and
- Transportation services.

Decision-Making Process

A committee will meet to determine if the school of origin is not in the best interest of each foster care child and the appropriate placement of the child. The committee will be comprised of the site administrator or representative, the LEA's POC, and a member of the CWA. In emergency circumstances the CWA 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.

In the event of a disagreement regarding school placement for a child in foster care, the CWA will be considered the final decision maker in making 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 of the case plan. The CWA also has 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.

Sharing of Documentation and Records

Foster care parents, social workers or other legal guardians will be allowed to immediately enroll children in foster care in the school district without having the necessary paperwork (birth certificates, shot records, academic records, special education records, etc.) This is to help aid the student with a smooth transition into the district. The receiving school district will contact the school district of origin 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 CWA:

- Power of attorney
- Affidavit
- Court Order

Piedmont Public Schools will share education records with the CWA that are allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other state privacy laws. This allows educational agencies to disclose without parental consent educational records, including IDEA, of students in foster care to the CWA.

Collaborative Structure and Participation

The POC will meet with the site administrator, school counselor, classroom teacher, and foster parent as needed to discuss the progress of the child in foster care and will document the results of meetings. All decisions will be made utilizing a collaborative team approach to determine what will be in the best interest of the child.

The Best Interest Determination Document Regarding the Child's School Placement (school of origin or the receiving school)

Piedmont Public Schools shall utilize the following sample form from the Oklahoma State Department of Education in making a "best interest" determination for each child in foster care. The final determination as to what is in the best interest of the child will be made by the CWA.

Best Interest Determination Evaluation

Printed on School Letterhead and Individualized for Each Student

Child's Name: _____ Birthday: _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____ Current District: _____

Current Site: _____

Student will remain in the current school unless consideration of the following factors indicates a change of school placement is in the child's best interest (check all that apply)

	School Of Origin (A)	Receiving School (B)	Other Previous School Attended (C)
<p>Which school will better meet the relational needs of the child? Select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Siblings <input type="radio"/> Relationships with peers <input type="radio"/> Relationships with staff <p>Describe the relationship connections at current school:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>List strategies for maintaining important connections should other best interest determination be made:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>Which school will better meet the individual academic needs and challenges of the child? Select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> IEP <input type="radio"/> 504 Plan <input type="radio"/> Gifted Program <input type="radio"/> Career Tech <input type="radio"/> EL Services 			
<p>Which school will better meet the social/emotional needs and challenges of the child?</p> <p>Select all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Social <input type="radio"/> Emotional <input type="radio"/> Safety 			

Which school will best meet the permanency goal and likelihood of reunification with parents or siblings? _____			
Describe the child's transfer history. _____			
Which school does the student prefer to attend? Explain: _____ _____			
Which school does the caregiver or current placement provider recommends the student attend? Explain: _____			
Identify strategies for successful transition to new school and/or support in current school: _____			

Supporting Documentation

Attach any supporting documentation used to determine best interest of child:

- Report Cards
- Progress Reports
- Achievement Data (test scores)
- Attendance Data
- IEP or Section 504 Plans
- Other: _____

Determination

Based on the information provided and considering the best interest of the child, the team has determined the following school is the most appropriate educational placement for the child:

Team Members:

LEA representative: _____
Printed name
Signature

CWA representative: _____
Printed name
Signature

Education Decision Maker _____
Printed name
Signature

Other: _____
Printed name
Signature

STUDENT RESIDENCY (Cont.)

Transportation procedures

Children in the school district: In addition to regular transportation routes, the school district will collaborate with the CWA when transportation is required to maintain children placed in foster care in a school of origin outside their usual attendance area or district when it is in the best interest of the student. Under the supervision of the superintendent, the POC will invite appropriate district officials, the CWA, and officials from other districts or agencies to promptly arrange cost-effective transportation for the student.

Responsibilities and costs related to student transportation

Piedmont Public Schools will collaborate with the CWA to develop and implement clear, written procedures governing how transportation is provided to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin. The school district will also work with the CWA to reach an agreement in regards to covering the transportation costs. The agreement will cover how the transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care. Each agreement can/will vary greatly because the unique needs of each child should be considered in making the decision on transportation.

Clear, written policies that will remove barriers to immediate enrollment and record transfers for children in foster care

Piedmont's Board of Education has modified existing board policy FD to eliminate any barriers to enrollment and/or transfer of educational records for children in foster care.

Piedmont Board of Education Policy FD

STUDENT RESIDENCY

It is the policy of the Piedmont Board of Education that the residence of any child for school purposes shall be the legal residence of the parents, guardian, or person having legal custody who holds legal residence within the district as defined in 70 O.S. §1-113 (C). Provided that such parent, legal guardian, person, or institution having legal custody contributes in a major degree to the support of such child. Provided, further, that any child residing in the district who is entirely self-supporting shall be considered a resident of the school district if the child works and attends school in the school district. Questions concerning legal residence of children shall be determined pursuant to procedures utilized by the State Department of Education in accordance with 70 O.S. §1-113.

The superintendent or designee may require the submission of evidence of residency in order to determine whether the student is eligible to attend the public schools or programs without payment of nonresident tuition. Such evidence may include, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

STUDENT RESIDENCY (Cont.)

1. Proof of payment of local personal income tax or ad valorem taxes;
2. Title to residential property in the district, or a valid unexpired lease agreement, or receipts for payment of rent on a district residence in which the applicant actually resides;
3. Proof of provisions of utilities;
4. A valid, unexpired motor vehicle operator's permit or motor vehicle registration;
5. Maintenance of voter registration;
6. Notarized affidavit verifying residency and that the affiant has assumed the permanent care and custody of the student. (The filing of a false affidavit shall be subject to punishment in accordance with 70 O.S. §1-113(A)(1).)

Homeless Students

In accordance with the Federal McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, homeless children shall have access to the same free and appropriate public education as provided to other children. The board shall make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children within the district, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their education that may exist in district policies or practices. No child or youth shall be discriminated against in this school district because of homelessness.

Children are deemed to be homeless under the following conditions:

1. A child who is lacking a fixed regular and adequate nighttime residence and who has a primary nighttime residence that is a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, a temporary residence prior to institutionalization, or a place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
2. A child who is placed in a transitional or emergency shelter before placement in a foster home or home for neglected children.
3. A child who is temporarily living in a trailer park or camping area due to lack of adequate living accommodations.
4. A child who is living in doubled-up accommodations due to loss of housing or other similar situation.
5. A migratory child who is staying in accommodations not fit for habitation.
6. A child who has run away from home and lives in a runaway shelter, abandoned building, the street, or other inadequate accommodations.
7. A child who is placed in a state institution because s/he has no other place to live.

STUDENT RESIDENCY (Cont.)

8. A child who has been abandoned by his/her family and who is staying in a hospital.
9. A child whose parents or guardian will not permit him/her to live at home and who lives on the street, in a shelter, or in other transitional or inadequate accommodation.
10. School-age unwed mothers or expectant mothers who are living in homes for unwed mothers because they have no other available living accommodations.

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

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 homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent.
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. (See policy FFAB.)
6. Other barriers to school attendance by homeless youth shall be waived.

The district will provide to each homeless child such school services that are comparable to services offered to other students in the district and that are determined to be in the child's best interest. Such services will include:

1. Public preschool programs;
2. Special education, Title I, and limited English proficiency programs for which they are eligible;
3. Vocational education programs;

STUDENT RESIDENCY (Cont.)

4. Gifted and talented programs;
5. Before and after school programs;
6. School meal programs; and
7. Transportation services.

Residency Officer

The Superintendent or designee will serve as residency officer. The residency officer may be contacted by calling the school district at 405-373-2311 or by writing to the residency officer at the following address, or by personally visiting the residency officer at 713 Piedmont Rd., Piedmont, OK 73078..

If this school district denies admittance of a student who claims to be a resident of the district, the parent, guardian, or person having care and custody of the student may request a review of the residency officer's decision. Such request for review shall be in writing and must be received by the residency officer within three school days of the denial of admittance. The request for review shall include any additional pertinent information that may justify the admittance of the child to the school district.

Upon receipt of a written request for review, the residency officer will render a decision and notify the parent of the decision within three school days of the receipt of the request for review.

If the parent disagrees with the findings of the residency officer, the parent will notify the residency officer within three school days of the receipt of the decision. The residency officer will submit his/her findings and all documents reviewed to the board of education.

The board of education will review the decision and the documents submitted by both the residency officer and the student and render a decision at the next board meeting. The board's decision may be appealed only pursuant to procedures utilized by the State Department of Education.

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.

The District will collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies when transportation is required to maintain children placed in foster care in a 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, Child Welfare Agencies, and officials from other districts or agencies to consider how such transportation is to be promptly arranged and funded in a cost effective manner.

STUDENT RESIDENCY (Cont.)

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.

REFERENCE: 70 O.S. §1-113, §1-114

70 O.S. §18-111

THIS POLICY REQUIRED BY LAW