



LOWNDES COUNTY
School District
CALEDONIA • NEW HOPE • WEST LOWNDES • CAREER TECH

2024-2025

EDUCATIONAL STABILITY *for* CHILDREN *in*
FOSTER CARE

Revised July 2024

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures used in the Lowndes County School District to enroll and withdraw children that have been placed under the care of the Mississippi Child Protection Service.

Goal

Lowndes County School District in collaboration with Lowndes County Division of Child Protection Services ensures that children placed in foster care have stability with regards to their education.

Vision

The Lowndes County School District works to provide an exemplary instructional system that challenges all students to attain their greatest potential for college and career readiness

Mission

The Lowndes County School District challenges all students to attain their greatest potential.

DEFINITIONS

District Point of Contact (DPC) – the person designated by the Lowndes County School District Superintendent to represent the District with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the district. The District Point of Contact will communicate directly with the Regional Director of Child Protective Services.

School Point of Contact (SPC) – the person designated by the building level Principal to represent the school with regards to foster children being enrolled or withdrawn from the school. The School Point of Contact will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact. The School Point of Contact will ensure that any and all student records are obtained when a foster child enrolls in the local school and that any and all student records are provided to the Child Protective Service Case Work when a foster child withdraws from the local school.

Regional Director of Child Protective Services (CPS) – the person from Child Protective Services that will communicate directly with the District Point of Contact and with the Child Protective Service Case Worker in charge of the case for a particular foster child.

Case Worker – the person from Child Protective Services that has been assigned the case of a child in foster care.

Foster Child – a child to whom the custody has been appointed to Child Protective Services by a sitting judicial authority.

Foster Parent – the parent(s) to whom a foster child is currently residing.

Enrollment of a Foster Child

Resident Foster Children

Foster children residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled as any other student that resides within the boundaries of the district. The SPC shall obtain any and all records pertaining to the student's current education. A list of these records is found in Appendix A of this document. **CPS will provide an Enrollment Letter stating who will enroll the foster child. CPS is the Legal Guardian of the child.**

Following the enrollment of the student the SPC will complete the enrollment document placing a copy on file in the office of the SPC while forwarding the original to the DPC. The DPC will keep on file the original until the student withdraws or graduations from the Lowndes County School District or the child is no longer in the care of Child Protective Services.

Non-Resident Foster Children

Foster children not residing within the district boundaries shall be enrolled once a determination has been made that it is in the best interest of the child to attend a school within the Lowndes County School District. The DPC from the originating district will collaborate with CPS, SPC, Principal, Parents (if allowed), Foster Parents, or other interested parties. A determination as to whether or not it would be in the best interest of the child to attend the school in the Lowndes County School District shall be made immediately following this collaboration. Schools will need a copy of this BID Form when the student arrives to be enrolled.

Exception: Students enrolling into Pre-K or Kindergarten for the first time do not require a BID form to be completed. In this situation, a letter is required from CPS indicating the child is in their care.

The Lowndes County School District recognizes the right of a foster child to attend the child's school of origin provided that it is reasonable.

Withdrawal of a Student by CPS

CPS has the right to withdraw students assigned to them by a judicial authority. CPS workers will work with the DPC to complete a BID Form to determine the best interest of the student. The SPC in this case 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 school or CPS.

The SPC shall contact the DPC if he/she thinks it would be in the best interest for the child being withdrawn to remain in the school of origin. The DPC will immediately contact the Regional Director of Child Protective Services to relay the concerns of the SPC as well as possibly scheduling a time to discuss the child's educational placement.

Student Records

In January 2013, Congress passed the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), which amended the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to permit educational agencies and institutions to disclose, without parental consent or the consent of an eligible student, education records of students in foster care to State and Tribal child welfare agencies.

MDCPS workers should provide copies of all educational records for school-age children in foster care when registering the child.

Records should include but not limited to the following:

- copy of birth certificate,
- copy of immunization form,
- withdrawal from previous school,
- grades from previous school,
- class schedule for junior high and high school students,
- copy of the most recent IEP if the student receives services from IDEA,
- copy of language service plan if the student received English Learner services, and
- any other record that will assist the school in the enrollment of the student.

Free/Reduced Lunch Application

Foster Care Parents or Child Protective Services should complete a Free/Reduced Lunch Form for the Lowndes County School District. The form along with verification of foster care shall be submitted to the School Point of Contact who in turn will forward the documents to the District Point of Contact. The District Point of Contact will forward the documents to the Food Service Director or Food Service Secretary.

School of Origin

These provisions emphasize the importance of limiting educational disruption by keeping the children who move in foster care (due to entering the foster care system or changing placements) in their schools of origin, unless it is determined in their best interest to change schools.

Best Interest Determination (BID)

- The LEA and MDCPS must determine the best interest of a child in foster care collaboratively.
- The cost of transportation cannot be considered when determining the best interest of the child.

Considerations:

- The child's participation in specialized instruction (e.g. gifted programming, career and technical education program, College Credit Plus, Advanced Placement classes, dual-credit classes).
- The availability of required special education and/or related service in a school other than the school of origin when the student has an identified disability under IDEA and 504.
- The availability of language services in a school other than the school of origin when the student has been identified as an English Learner pursuant to Title VI and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act.
- The student's ability to earn full academic credit, the ability to proceed to the next grade, or the ability to graduate on time.
- School climate, peer support, supportive adults and involvement in extracurricular activities.
- The availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the child's educational and socioemotional needs.
- The impact the commute to and from school would have on the student, based on developmental functioning. The cost of transportation or the appropriate services should not be a consideration when determining a child's best interest.
- For children with disabilities, the Fostering Connections Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federal requirements are to be factored in when determining the best interest.
- The safety of the child.
- The wishes of the parent, caregiver, and child.
- The toll of the commute, distance and time for the child to travel to and from the school he/she is attending at the time of placement.
- The projected duration of out-of-home placement.
- The child's academic, developmental and socialization needs.
- The effect a school change will have on the child's learning.
- The potential loss of credits, for high school students, which may occur due to changing schools in the middle of a term or semester.

Discussion of Student's Best Interest

1. How long has the student attended this school?
2. How well is the student performing academically?
3. How many schools has the student attended over the past few years? This year?
4. How have past school transfers impacted the student?
5. How is the current school serving the student's academic needs, including gifted or special education, vocational opportunities, and other interests? How can the new school serve these needs?

6. What is the student's academic and career goals?
7. How would changing schools affect the student's ability to earn full academic credit, proceed to the next grade, graduate on time, or receive an industry credential?
8. How is the current school serving the student's social, emotional, and cultural needs?
9. Does the student access school-based supportive services in the current school? How can the new school serve these needs?
10. Describe the nature, quality, and duration of the student's relationships in the current school. Consider whether the student has a meaningful and supportive relationship with an adult at the current school. Does the student have any family members at the school? Is he or she involved in extracurricular or other activities?
11. Is the student's new living arrangement expected to be short-or long term? What impact will this have on the student?
12. How would the commute to the current school impact the student? Consider the child's age and developmental functioning as well as the length of the commute with various modes of transportation. **The cost of transportation cannot be a factor when determining best interest.**
13. What other factors did the team consider when making this decision (How did you address the unique needs of the student?).

Responsibilities of LCSD

The LCSD will notify MDCPS if children are coming to school improperly dressed or without materials needed to support success.

MDCPS is the guardian and that foster parents or group home staff should not be making educational decisions for the child/children.

LCSD should be made aware of the trauma children in foster care experience and associated behaviors. LCSD and MDPS should collaborate with regards to treatment goals that can be incorporated in the child's BIP or IEP, if possible.

LCSD and/or MDCPS workers may invite therapists and/or group home staff to participate in educational related meeting.

Transportation

LCSD will collaborate with MDCPS concerning transportation for a foster care child that lives outside of the district but remains a student in the district. The following will be explored in providing transportation such as:

- MDCPS will arrange for the child to be dropped off at a school bus stop for the school of origin;
- MDCPS will arrange for the foster parent or other designee to transport the child to school;
- MDCPS and LEA will review pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the foster care placement that cross district boundaries;
- MDCPS and LEA will determine if the child is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs.
- MDCPS and LEA will address how the child welfare agency will use foster care maintenance payments and administrative funds to pay for transportation to the school;
- MDCPS and LEA will specify how “additional costs” of transportation will be calculated, to delineate clearly the LEA’s responsibility to provide transportation when there are no additional costs;
- MDCPS and LEA will specifically describe how transportation to the school of origin will be provided in situations where there are not additional costs; and
- MDCPS and LEA will specify the timing and procedures for the child welfare agency to reimburse the LEA for transportation costs.

In the event of a dispute between the LEA and MDCPS 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 LEA and MDCPS.

Appendix A

Children in Foster Care Enrollment Records Checklist

The following records are required for enrollment of a child in foster care.

Supporting Documentation:

- ☐ Report Cards and Progress Reports
 - ☐ Discipline Records
 - ☐ Student Achievement
 - ☐ Teacher Evaluations
 - ☐ Attendance Records
 - ☐ Written input from absent participants
 - ☐ IEP and/or 504 Plan
 - ☐ Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
 - ☐ Withdrawal From Previous School
 - ☐ Copy of Birth Certificate
 - ☐ Copy of Immunization Form
 - ☐ Other:
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Records Checklist for Case Worker Withdrawing a Child

Supporting Documentation:

- ☐ Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- ☐ Current Grades
- ☐ Discipline Records
- ☐ List of student activities, if junior high or high school student
- ☐ Attendance Records
- ☐ IEP and/or 504 Plan
- ☐ Transcript showing current credits, if high school student
- ☐ Withdrawal Form
- ☐ Copy of Birth Certificate
- ☐ Copy of Immunization Form
- ☐ Other:

Records Checklist for Case Worker Enrolling a Child

Supporting Documentation:

- ☐ Report Cards and/or Progress Reports
- ☐ Withdrawal Form from Previous School if available
- ☐ Copy of Birth Certificate
- ☐ Copy of Immunization Form
- ☐ Completed Registration Packet
- ☐ Completed Free/Reduced Lunch Application
- ☐ Verification Document for Foster Care Placement

☐ Other:

BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT

Promote educational stability by ensuring that students in foster care can perform at the same high levels as their peers with limited disruption by first determining what is in the youth's best interest.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) stipulates that foster care students should only change schools if remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest

How to Make A Best Interest Determination

- If a change in school is being considered, the local education agency (LEA) and child welfare agency (CWA) must collaborate to complete the Best Interest Determination (BID) process.
- The MDCPS case worker or designee and the school of origin POC should engage in a conversation with the youth and any other appropriate parties to discuss the following information as it relates to the youth's educational stability:
 - Number of schools the youth has attended
 - How often the youth is changing schools
 - Home placement type/length as well as number of placements
 - Youth's involvement in extracurricular / community activities
 - The youth's academic/career goals
 - The youth's academic achievement
 - The youth's ability to earn full academic credits, participate in sports, graduate on time, etc.
 - The student's ability to receive necessary supports/services
 - What the youth wants, what the family wants, what the resource family wants, what CPS wants
 - School safety concerns
 - Youth's access to gifted or accelerated programs
 - If changing schools could affect the youth's end of year testing
 - Travel time to and from school
 - Biological family, resource family, friends, mentor, residential staff, MDCPS connections
 - Youth's relationships and connections to teachers and school staff
- The conversation will result in a determination that should be recorded on the BID Form. All parties who participate should be listed on the BID Form with the corresponding signature.
- Youth shall remain enrolled in their school of origin until the BID process is complete and a determination has been made.
- If the determination is made for the youth to change schools, the youth should be enrolled immediately in the new school even if the required paperwork is not available.

- The enrolling school's Foster Care Point of Contact (POC) will contact the school of origin to obtain necessary documentation.
- There must be a school of origin in order for the BID process to occur. With no school of origin, the normal school enrollment process will occur.

BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION FOSTER CARE SCHOOL PLACEMENT FORM

BID Timeframe				
<p>A BID must be completed every time a youth comes into care or there is a placement change while in care. BID conferences/meetings with the school district POC must take place within five (5) business days of a child entering foster care or changing placement.</p> <p style="background-color: yellow; text-align: center;">The youth shall not be withdrawn/enrolled until a BID is completed.</p>				
Student Information				
Student Name: (first, middle, last)		DOB:	Date of BID:	
		Grade:		
Address/District of Residence:		MSIS:	IEP Ruling <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
School/District of Origin:		(enter school name)		
Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services Information				
Case Worker: _____		COR:	Phone: () ____-____	
ASWS: _____			Phone: () ____-____	
Determination				
<input type="checkbox"/> The student shall remain in the district/school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement (school of origin). Name of School District/School: (enter school name)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Based on the best interest determination, a change in school placement is recommended. In accordance with ESSA, the child will be enrolled in the district/school of current residence (receiving school). Name of School District/School: (enter school name)				
<p><i>NOTE: If a change in educational placement is necessary, enrollment in the new school must take place immediately. All educational records must be provided to the receiving school. * An IEP Placement meeting should be scheduled with the new school district's POC.</i></p>				
BID Participants				
Title	Participated	Printed Name	Signature	Agree with Determination
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Birth Parent(s) if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
MDCPS POC- Case Worker or Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guardian Ad Litem	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
POC for School of Origin	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
POC for New School District (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
IEP Team Member (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Foster Parent (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Ed. Decision Maker (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Supporting Documentation

Indicate and attach any supporting documentation which was used in making this best interest determination interest. Send documentation to the receiving school district if applicable. (The following is checklist of sample documents that may be considered. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.)

- ☐ Report cards
- ☐ Progress reports
- ☐ Achievement data (test scores)
- ☐ Attendance data
- ☐ IEP or 504 Plan
- ☐ E-mails or correspondence from individuals consulted
- ☐ Disciplinary referrals
- ☐ Health reports/records

A copy of the BID form must be sent to the receiving school district and BID@mdcps.ms.gov. When applicable, a copy of the BID form must be sent to the group home and/or treatment facility.

BID Impasse

The COR Worker must forward the BID Packet to the MDCPS Education Unit if an impasse is reached between the LEA and MDCPS. The LEA POC must forward a copy to the MDE Compulsory School Attendance Unit if an impasse is reached.



The State of Mississippi
Tate Reeves, Governor
Andrea Sanders, Commissioner
www.mdcps.ms.gov

Date

Dear _____ enrollment office:
Name of school

This letter is to inform you that _____
Name Relationship to youth
has permission from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services in
_____ County to enroll _____ in school.
Youth's name

The above-named individual may enroll the youth; however, school withdrawals of children in foster care must be initiated and completed by MDCPS or an individual specifically authorized by the youth court to execute primary and secondary school registration procedures. **Parent(s), foster parent(s), and group home staff are not permitted to withdraw a child in foster care from school under any circumstances.**

The above-named individual has permission to receive and have access to the youth's current records regarding grades, discipline, teacher conferences, accommodations, and other educational related matters/concerns. The above-named individual may also attend educational meetings regarding the youth.

Thank you for your immediate assistance with this matter. Should you have additional questions, please contact me at _____.
Email or phone number

Respectfully submitted,

ASWS Signature

ASWS Printed Name



Notification of Placement (Change)Form

For Children/Youth in the custody of MDCPS

The below information is for official use by authorized State Child Welfare Agency (CWA) and Local Educational Agency (LEA) personnel only.
To Be Completed & Signed by MDCPS COR Worker/Designee within 7 days of Initial Placement or Placement Change.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Child/Youth Name:

Age:

DOB:

Grade Level/Classification:

Enrollment Status:

Initial Enrollment ☐ School Change ☐ Currently Enrolled-No School Change ☐

Date of Placement/Placement Change:

Date of Enrollment:

Date of BID:

AGENCY AND PLACEMENT CONTACT

MDCPS COR Worker:

Phone:

Email:

MDCPS ASWS:

Phone:

Email:

COR:

Check one: Initial Placement ☐ Foster Care Placement Change ☐ Exiting Foster Care ☐

Foster Care Provider Type: Family Foster Home ☐ Relative/Kinship Home ☐ Therapeutic Home ☐ Facility ☐

Foster Care Provider Name:

Phone

Foster Care Provider Address:

The above Foster Care Provider has permission to receive and have access to the above student's current records regarding grades, discipline, teacher conferences, accommodations, and other educational related matters/concerns: Yes ☐ No ☐

MDCPS COR Worker Signature

Date

LEA/SCHOOL INFORMATION (To Be completed by/obtained from School Personnel Within 7 Days of Initial Placement or Placement Change)

Student's MSIS #:

Current School Year:

School Name:

Phone:

School Address: Responsible

School District:

Phone:

Received/Completed By:

Title:

Date Received/Completed:

Signature:

****Email this completed form to education@mdcps.ms.gov****

Lowndes County School District
Transportation Agreement Form

Child's Name: _____ DOB: _____ Grade: _____

MSIS ID: _____

Custodial Agent Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

Caregiver (Name and Contact Information):

Educational Representative, if applicable (Name and Contact Information):

District: _____

District Foster Care Point of Contact (Name and Contact Information):

Case Worker (Name and Contact Information):

The custodial agency verifies that:

1. It is in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin based on the following factors:

2. Eligibility of the child under Title IV-E from the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services: _____ Yes _____ No

- a. If YES, reimbursement for some funding of transportation costs:

_____ will be pursued

_____ cannot be pursued for the reason below:

3. The following was executed to identify a no-cost or low-cost transportation service:

The district verifies that:

4. There is an existing transportation option that can server the student's new housing placement.

_____ Yes _____No

If YES, explain the option:

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that the most cost effective transportation procedures for this student will be:

The District and Mississippi Child Protection Services agree that while permanent transportation is arranged, interim transportation arrangements will be:

These transportation procedures were agreed to on the following date:_____ and will be implemented within five (5) days, by the following date:_____.

Authorized Signature
Mississippi Child Protective Services

Date

Signature
LEA Foster Care Point of Contact

Date

Dispute Resolution to State Level Point of Contact

To appeal the district's decision to the Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, please complete this form and submit it by the date indicated on the Written Notice you received from the school. You may submit this form by any of the following methods:

- Scan and email it to twilliams@mdek12.org with the subject "Foster Child Dispute Appeal" to Terissa Williams, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact;

OR

- Return the paper form to Terissa Williams, Mississippi Department of Education, Foster Care Point of Contact at 359 N. West Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Student Name: _____

School in which enrollment is sought: _____

I am the educational decision-maker for this student, and I believe the school in which we are seeking enrollment is in the student's best interest because:

I believe the student has a right to attend this school because:

If you would like to provide additional information, please attach it to this form. The student shall remain in the school of origin, receiving all appropriate educational services including transportation, until the dispute reaches its final resolution.

Educational decision-maker name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

