



# Lawrence Public Schools

## Policy

**Section J: STUDENTS**

**JFABF**

**Subject: EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care. Educational stability has a lasting impact on students' academic achievement and wellbeing, and, as such, the District is committed to ensuring that students in foster care have equal access to high-quality, stable educational experiences from preschool through high school graduation.

Irrespective of the location of a foster care placement, students in foster care will continue to attend their school of origin, unless after a collaborative decision-making process, it is determined to be in the student's best interest to enroll in and attend school in the District in which the student resides in foster care. Enrollment of students in the District where they reside in foster care will take place immediately upon such a determination.

The District has designated a point of contact for students in foster care. The District and the point of contact will collaborate with DCF to ensure that students can access transportation and the other services to which they may be entitled.

### **Best Interest Determination**

Decisions about whether a student in foster care should continue to attend the school of origin should be made collaboratively by DCF, the student (as appropriate), the student's family and/or foster family (or, if different, the person authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of the student), the school and District of origin, and (when appropriate) the local District where the student is placed. Best interest determinations should focus on the needs of each individual student and account for unique factors about the student and his or her foster care placement. Every effort should be made to reach agreement regarding the appropriate school placement of a student in foster care; however, DCF will finalize the best interest determination if the relevant parties cannot agree on the best school for the student to attend.

The District can seek review of DCF's decision by utilizing a Foster Care School Selection Dispute Resolution Process established by DESE and DCF. Decisions made through this process are not subject to review. To the extent feasible and appropriate, the District will ensure that a child remains



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in his or her school of origin while the disputes are being resolved to minimize disruptions and reduce the number of moves between schools.

### Transportation

The District of origin must collaborate with DCF on how transportation will be arranged and provided to ensure that students in foster care who need transportation to remain in their school of origin will receive such transportation while they are in foster care.

Transportation options may include using Title I funds, establishing regional collaborations among districts, coordinating with existing routes for transportation, seeking help from foster parent(s), etc. Absent other agreements between the District and DCF, the District of origin is responsible for providing transportation to and from the school of origin. The District will provide transportation services to school in a manner comparable to the transportation provided for all other students in the District and when it is in the student's best interest. To that end, and as best practice, the District will only be required to provide transportation to students living or placed within a reasonable distance from the school: 45 minutes or less for students in Pk and K and less than one hour for students in grades 1 through 12.

### Immediate Enrollment

If it is in the best interest of a student in foster care to leave the school of origin, the student must be immediately enrolled in the District in which he or she resides in foster care. During enrollment of students in foster care, DCF representatives will present the District with a form indicating that the student is in foster care, along with a state-agency identification badge.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be permitted to enroll under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when



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necessary. After enrollment, the District will immediately request available records from the student's previous school.

All rights provided to students and families outlined in the District's Assignment policies are afforded on the same terms as families who reside in the District.

SOURCE: Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), October 2019

LEGAL REFS.: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA);  
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008  
(Fostering Connections Act)

CROSS REFS.:  
JF, School Admissions  
J5AA, School Assignment Policy  
EEA, Student Transportation Services

*Approved by the Lawrence Alliance for Education, 06/09/2021*