

School Transportation: What Social Workers Need to Know

CFSA Blueprint Strategy

August 2015

Factsheet #3

School stability is critical for the permanency and educational success for children in CFSA custody. Resolving transportation issues can often be the #1 strategy to ensuring school stability.

Here are **some key tips to support good transportation decisions.**

Office of Well Being (OWB) staff are here to help. Contact us with questions:

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For more information, visit <http://cfsa.dc.gov/page/educationresources>

The resource parent or other caregiver must make arrangements to ensure a child gets to and from school each day if school transportation is not provided by the school district or educational program. **CFSA will provide time-limited transportation assistance in some scenarios.**

Eligibility requirements:

1. Children five (5) years of age and older;
2. A Best Interest Decision is made at initial removal or placement changes for the child to remain in the current school; and
3. All alternative means of transportation (e.g., *resource parents, other family members, special education transportation, public transportation, and/or day care providers*) or supports to get a child to and from school have been fully explored and found unavailable.

Before referring a child for transportation services:

- ✓ At removal or upon replacement, ensure the resource parent has a plan in place to transport the child to/from school, and ensure they have considered all available transportation options (e.g., *family members, caregiver, public transportation, and day care provider*).
- ✓ If a child receives special education services, s/he may be eligible for transportation services through the child's IEP. The social worker should help the family fully explore that option before seeking transportation assistance from the agency. For more information on this process, see the Children's Law Center Tip Sheet (*link on page 2*).
- ✓ For children enrolled in public schools outside of the District of Columbia, the local public school system typically provides transportation to and from the neighborhood school. The social worker should contact the child's school to address any questions or concerns regarding school transportation.
- ✓ CFSA supports using public transportation to get to and from school if it is found to be a safe and appropriate means of transportation for a youth.

Referring children for contracted transportation through CFSA:

Once it is confirmed that all other transportation options have been exhausted:

- ✓ Submit a referral for transportation assistance using the OWB Universal eReferral form.
- ✓ All referrals must be approved by the OWB before services will be authorized. Final approval will not be given until the OWB has detailed information about the child's transportation needs (i.e., specific pick-up and drop-off times and locations). Approval of transportation requests are made within 3 business days after the complete referral is submitted, unless exigent circumstances exist or there is a need to expedite.
- ✓ When reviewing a referral, the OWB will consider the following factors:
 - Other available transportation options (i.e., *resource parent or caregiver, community resources, public transportation, whether special education transportation may be available, etc.*);
 - Child or youth's safety and best interests; and
 - The length and distance of the child's commute.
- ✓ If the transportation request is approved, the contract vendor will notify the resource parent of the date services will be initiated and the specific pick-up and drop-off times.
Note: The authorized start date of service is three (3) business days from the date OWB approves transportation services. In the interim, the social worker or designee should work with the caregivers and other team members to ensure the child still gets to/from school.

Changing or Cancelling Services

- ✓ Transportation is a time-limited service that will be reevaluated every 90 days and does not exceed the duration of the current school year. If the need for transportation changes during the authorized period, the social workers should notify the OWB.
- ✓ Any requests to change transportation (i.e., *pick-up or drop-off locations or times*) must be submitted to the OWB at least 24 hours before the requested change to ensure the transportation provider can accommodate the request.
- ✓ If there is a need to cancel a transportation pick-up or drop-off for any reason, including illness, appointments, one-time change in the child's schedule, a child's abscondence, etc., the resource parent must contact the transportation vendor directly to request the cancellation.
- ✓ Transportation services may be suspended or discontinued if either of the following occurs on more than three occasions without prior notification to the transportation vendor:
 - a. The child is not ready or is unavailable for pick-up.
 - b. The caregiver is not available to receive the child at drop-off.Before the transportation services are terminated or suspended, CFSA will attempt to resolve the issues of concern.
- ✓ Any child who poses an immediate danger to self or others while on private transportation may be suspended from services to allow time for the social worker to address the issue.
 - a. The social worker may request a team meeting with the child, caregiver, and/or other relevant team members.
 - b. Transportation services may be discontinued if the behavior re-occurs or cannot be resolved.

If either of these situations occurs, social workers should arrange alternative transportation to and from school for the child.

General Transportation Information: How Do Children Get to School?

DC Public and Charter Schools:

- Walk: generally no school buses in DC.
- Public Transportation: students in DC eligible for School Transit Subsidy Program.
- Buses: when child is in special education and IEP explicitly includes transportation.

Maryland Schools:

- Walk: students may walk to school if they live within walking distance.
- Buses: county provides buses for students to ride to neighborhood school.
- Public Transportation: students can ride, but school does not provide funding.

For more information about transportation see Children's Law Center Tip Sheet:

<http://www.childrenslawcenter.org/sites/default/files/attachments/resources/5.%20School%20Transportation.pdf>