

Resource Parent Handbook

Educational Services

Best Interest Determination

When a child enters foster care, or changes resource homes, CFSA uses the best interest determination (BID) process to verify the appropriateness of the child's current educational setting or to clarify if another setting is more suited to the child's needs. Whether the BID decision results in keeping the child in their school of origin or their school placement is changed, CFSA and the private agency must ensure that the school placement is appropriate for the child's needs and that transportation is in place if needed.

CFSA policy (Educational Services) and best practices require the Agency to provide children and youth in out-of-home care with equal access to positive academic experiences that help improve overall educational outcomes for children in care. It is the social worker's responsibility to monitor educational progress while the resource parent is responsible for partnering with the child's educational planning team to help further the child's success.

Educational Decision-Making

A child's parent is usually the person who decides where the child attends school and whether the child receives educational services. In these cases, CFSA encourages ongoing parental involvement in educational planning to promote the child's academic success.

When a child's educational assessment reveals a need for special education services, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) specifies that the child's parent should be the educational decision-maker. If the parent is deceased or the court has terminated the parent's rights, the social worker will consult with members of the social work team to determine whether to request a court-appointed educational attorney, or to transfer educational decision-making to another individual who is active in the case.

Educational Enrollment



If birth parents are the educational decision-makers for a child, the parents are responsible for enrollment. Ideally, enrollment for the school-aged child continues at the same school as before the child entered out-of-home care. School continuity and stability are maintained whenever it is in the child's best interests.

Under some circumstances, the Agency may partner with the birth parent to determine if enrollment in a new school is appropriate for the child, e.g., when school distance and transportation are considerations. However, to ensure as much stability for the child as possible, CFSA prefers to maintain a child's enrollment in the school of origin.

The DC School Lottery

The [My School DC](#) common lottery is a single, random lottery that determines placement for new students at all participating public and public charter schools in the District that serve PK3 – Grade 12. Student-school matches are based on the following considerations:



- (1) number of available spaces at each school
- (2) sibling, in-boundary, and other lottery preferences
- (3) each student's random lottery number

If you need assistance with school placement for a child in your care, and you would like to take advantage of the lottery, please contact the child's social worker or your support worker for assistance with the following tasks:

- Determining eligibility
- Matching the child in your home with the school best suited to the child's academic needs
- Filling out the My School DC online application

Educational Programs

CFSA prioritizes age and developmentally appropriate educational programs that are designed to meet any of the child's unique needs. For older youth who are interested in pursuing post-secondary education, CFSA makes every effort to prepare youth for such opportunities. As a team member, if you believe that an educational program is not addressing the academic needs of a child or youth living in your home, please be sure to discuss your concerns with the social worker or support worker.

Educational Services for Older Youth

An older (age 15+) youth's education specialist is responsible for identifying all graduation requirements (e.g., school credits and community service hours). If there are discrepancies with any credits or hours on the youth's transcripts, the social worker and the assigned education specialist are responsible for making inquiries with the school to resolve the discrepancy.

If a youth drops out of high school, the social worker and education specialist are responsible for referring the youth to supportive community resources that assist with educational options, e.g., a vocational path or a general education degree or diploma equivalency.

For youth suspected of having a developmental disability, the social worker and education specialist are responsible for reviewing the youth's educational records at least one year prior to the youth turning 18 years old. This review will help ensure that the youth has a valid educational evaluation on file. If there is no current evaluation, the social worker is responsible for immediately referring the youth for cognitive testing.

NOTE: A diagnosis of an intellectual disability is required in order for the youth to receive adult support services from the Department of Disability Services and Rehabilitative Services Agency.

Post-Secondary Preparation and Education



CFSA's Older Youth Empowerment (OYE) begins working with youth in the ninth grade to prepare and plan for college or vocational training (see the Agency's [Older Youth Services](#) policy for more information). For those youth academically eligible for post-secondary education, OYE offers pre-college supports to further their education and future professional opportunities.

OYE will provide funds for the following high school graduation activities (based on available funding):

- cap and gown
- class pictures
- class rings
- yearbook
- invitations and announcements

Pre-college services include but are not limited to the following supports:

- Creation and presentation of a college preparation curriculum
- Assistance with college enrollment, including on-site visits and funding for summer bridge programs (based on available funding)
- Individual consultations, including but not limited to direct assistance regarding any and all aspects of the pre-college curriculum
- Limited payments (based on available funding) for the following expenses:
 - Preparation classes for and completion of standardized testing
 - Fees related to completion of a general education degree
 - Summer sessions or college orientation
 - College application and entrance fees, room deposits, books, laptop, etc.
 - Moving and transportation expenses

For youth admitted to a post-secondary institution, OYE facilitates partial funding for the cost of attendance through the [Chafee Education and Training Vouchers](#) (ETV) program. Eligibility for the ETV program includes (but is not limited to) the following criteria for youth:

- 18 to 20 years old
- United States citizenship or legal residency
- Placement in out-of-home care at age 15 or older
- Adopted or under legal guardianship at age 16
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Enrollment as full-time or part-time student
- Proof of post-secondary or training program submission of a [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#)

Vocational Training

For youth who may not be interested in or may not be eligible for college, OYE begins to explore vocational training and employment opportunities. OYE may provide any one or more of the following opportunities for youth:

- District's Summer Youth Employment Program
- Vocational assessments and funding for vocational training
- Instruction in basic employability skills
- Referral to industry-specific programs



- Employment searches
- Internships
- Ongoing OYE support

Special Education Services (All Ages)

Children who qualify for special education services may receive an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan. Both the IEP and 504 plans are structured to assist a child's improvement and ongoing learning in an educational setting that receives funding from the US Department of Education.

*An **IEP** outlines measurable, annual goals that help a child with an identified disability to make progress in age-appropriate activities and in the general education curriculum. IEPs are written to help improve the present level of academic achievement and functional performance.*

*A 504 plan is based on **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**, which prohibits discrimination in educational institutions on the basis of physical or mental impairments impacting learning. 504s are action plans and supports that facilitate a child's learning despite a disability.*

If a child in your home has an IEP or 504 plan as part of their educational services, the social worker will discuss the plan with you. If asked, please keep any school records, evaluations, and progress reports in a file for sharing with team members, as needed.

As an essential team member, you should be included in IEP or 504 review meetings with relevant school personnel, such as the school nurse, IEP team, 504 coordinator, or others. Other meeting attendees may include the birth parent, the assigned CFSA education specialist, the child's guardian *ad litem*, or a court-appointed decision-maker.

Out-of-School Time Programs

DC Public Schools (DCPS) offer [Out-of-School-Time Programs](#) (OSTP) in different schools across all DC Wards. The after-school programs provide students with academic support, free supper or snack, and a variety of enrichment activities. DCPS teachers, paraprofessionals, and partner organizations support these programs.

Depending on the school, OSTPs serve all grades while some schools have programs only for children from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5. To learn which schools have

OSTPs to serve children in your home, please click on the link above. Social workers can assist you to enroll the child in an OSTP in your Ward.

Transportation Services



The Agency prefers that the resource parent provide or arrange school transportation to normalize the education experience for the children in your care. However, if you need assistance with school transportation, the social worker can assist in determining a viable plan for the child, based on both the child's needs and your needs as the resource parent.

Busing in DC is limited to special education students. The social worker may explore whether busing transportation can be added to the child's individual education plan (IEP) before seeking transportation assistance from the Agency.

Please note: Contracted transportation is a time-limited service that the Agency re-evaluates every 90 days. The service will not extend past the current school year. If needs change during the school year, please inform the child's social worker.

If you are concerned about school transportation, please discuss your concerns directly with the social worker or support worker. As always, if the transportation situation is not resolved, please follow the chain of command as your initial strategy for resolution. First, reach out to the supervisor. If there is still no resolution, you should reach out to the program manager.