CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY (CFSA)
2011 Quick Reference Guide
Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care

Research shows that on average, a child in foster care may change schools two to three times per year; and with each move, a child falls 3 to 6 months academically behind their classmates. Further, almost half of foster youth nationally do not complete high school. The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) believes that children and youth in foster care deserve equal access to positive academic experiences as their non-foster care peers and therefore is committed to improving educational stability for all young people in care.

Educational stability must be a priority when assessing the child's placement needs. When a school-aged child enters a foster care placement or experiences a change in foster care placement, CFSA or the contractor provider must complete the following tasks:

1. Exhaust all efforts to <u>maintain the child in his or her current school of enrollment</u>, taking into account the appropriateness of the child's current educational setting and the distance from the new residence to the school in which the child is currently enrolled.

2. Determine collectively with a team of individuals who know the child whether a child can remain in his or her current school of enrollment.
   a. The team may include the parents, the child, foster parents, resource providers, guardian *ad litem*, and other significant parties.
   b. The School Placement Decision-Making Guide is a resource that will assist the team in making this determination.
   c. A Family Team Meeting (FTM) may serve as an opportunity to discuss the child's educational needs, including transportation to the current school of enrollment.
   d. Submit a school enrollment packet to the Office of Clinical Practice (OCP) education specialist and update the education screens in FACES.NET.

3. Coordinate transportation for the child to his or her current school of enrollment with family support worker and foster parent until private transportation can be arranged.
   - To arrange transportation, submit a universal e-referral to OCP (note: it can take up to 3 business days to arrange for private transportation).

4. If it is determined that it is in the best interest of the child to be enrolled in a new school, ensure that the child makes an immediate transition into an alternate school placement through the following actions:
   a. Submit a new school enrollment packet[1] before the child's first day of school to an education specialist in OCP and updating the education screens in FACES.NET.
   b. Confirming that the child's educational records are transferred to the new school within 2 business days of the records request.
   c. Coordinating transportation for the child to the new school with the family support worker and the foster parent until private transportation can be arranged.
   d. Submitting a universal e-referral to OCP for private transportation. (It can take up to 3 business days to arrange for private transportation.)

5. Document ALL interactions and information regarding the child's school placement in the FACES.NET service plan, education, and contact screens, including information on how the team determined that the child should maintain or change schools.

6. Complete an in-home or out-of-home educational/vocational assessment[2] form for every school-aged child within 30 days of removal.

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[1] Packet contents vary by jurisdiction. Please see: http://cfsa.dc.gov/page/school-enrollment-process.
[2] For additional guidance on completing the Educational/Vocational Assessment review the *Education Practice Guide for School-Aged Children and Youth* (January 2010), the administrative issuance *CFSA-10-10 Education/Vocation Assessments* or consult an Education Specialist at CFSA or your agency.

FACES Documentation Tip: The "Objectives" link in the Child Service Plan's Education Domain[1] contains data fields ("Specify Measures" and "Progress Notes") for entering discussion and determinations on the child's best interest regarding school placement, enrollment, and educational stability.

These screens must be completed and maintained during regular case planning intervals.

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[1] The Service Plan Education Domain is automatically generated if a youth's SDM score indicates an educational need. However, if the SDM reflects that the youth is performing satisfactorily or better in school, then the social worker will have to create an educational domain by selecting a "New Domain" under the youth's Service Plan Tree. These "user selected" domains contain ample space to log educational best interest discussions as described above.