

# Title I, Part A: Foster Care Education Program

FY22 LEA Handbook



## Table of Contents

General Information .....	3
Local Educational Agency (LEA) Responsibilities .....	3
Foster Care Points of Contact Responsibilities.....	4
Identification .....	5
Data Collection Requirements .....	5
Funding.....	5

## Title I, Part A Foster Care Program

### **General Information**

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is required to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care. (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(E)). In coordination with state and tribal child welfare agencies, GaDOE must ensure that its LEAs implement the Title I educational stability requirements for children in foster care. Additionally, the SEA must conduct regular monitoring and oversight to guarantee appropriate implementation of these provisions at the local level. (See 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.331(d), 200.328(a); 34 C.F.R. § 76.770).

On the state level, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), which houses the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) periodically sends a list of children in foster care that are flagged in the GaDOE's student information system for information sharing and reporting purposes. On the local level, LEAs are now able to retrieve a list of children in foster care to better identify and provide services. LEAs are to collaborate with their local child welfare agencies and may periodically receive information directly from foster parents, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), DFCS case workers or Education Support Monitors (ESM), within the Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) unit of DFCS. Once identified, LEAs must implement its plan to ensure educational stability for children in care. For the best interest of the children in care, LEAs should follow all mandated regulations under FERPA and keep the status of these children confidential. As a result, GaDOE requires all LEAs, including virtual schools and charter schools that function as an LEA, to complete a Foster Care Transportation Plan. The plan is completed in addition to the development and implementation of written transportation procedures and the identification of a foster care point of contact.

### **Local Educational Agency (LEA) Responsibilities**

Title I, Part A requires that LEAs disaggregate students in foster care as a subgroup in their student information system (SIS). The local SIS uploads to GaDOE's Data Collection office. This disaggregated subgroup must be a part of the SEA and LEA report card. Additionally, students in foster care is a disaggregated group in the LEA's comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) that informs the LEA's District Improvement Plan.

An LEA must collaborate with the State or local child welfare agency to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, when in their best interest, will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care (the transportation procedures). These procedures must ensure that:

- Children in foster care needing transportation to their schools of origin will immediately receive transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance

with section OCGA §20-2-133(b), OCGA §20-2-690.1 and 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act; and

- If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the LEA will provide such transportation if (1) the local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the cost of such transportation; (2) the LEA agrees to pay for the cost; or (3) the LEA and local child welfare agency agree to share the cost. (ESEA 1112(c)(5)(B)).

Coordination among multiple LEAs and child welfare agencies may be necessary. An LEA must ensure that a child in foster care needing transportation to the school of origin receives such transportation for the duration of the time the child is in foster care. (ESEA section 1112(c)(5)(B)). When a child exits foster care, the LEA should continue to prioritize the child's educational stability, consider each child's best interest on a case-by-case basis, and, when possible, make every effort to continue to ensure transportation is provided through the end of the school year, if needed, when remaining in the school of origin would be in the child's best interest.

LEAs and child welfare agencies have flexibility in determining which factors should be considered as part of evaluating the appropriateness of the current educational setting, as well as any additional factors that pertain to a child's best interest. LEAs and child welfare agencies should carefully review the "Best Interest Determination" section of the [Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care](#); however, child welfare agencies make the final best interest decision due to factors beyond the scope of the educational arena, including, but not limited to court-ordered requirements, family dynamics, previous trauma, safety concerns, sibling placements, socio-emotional needs, etc. Transportation costs should not be considered when determining a child's best interest, which is consistent with the program instruction released by The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) subsequent to the passage of the Fostering Connections Act.

When a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child is immediately enrolled in a new school, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by any such child to obtain relevant academic and other records.

### **Foster Care Points of Contact Responsibilities**

The LEA foster care point of contact is essential to the LEA Foster Care Education program. It is important that the LEA foster care points of contact have some knowledge and experience in dealing with federal programs, social worker responsibilities, and counseling responsibilities. It is important that the LEA foster care points of contact have knowledge of the LEA, understands the community, has effective communication skills, and has a commitment to the children and youth in foster care. The LEA Foster care point of contact is a mandatory participant in the development of the LEA's comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) and the LEA's District Improvement Plan.

Among other duties, the LEA foster care points of contact must ensure that:

- With the assistance of LEA personnel, implement procedures to ensure foster care children and youth receive appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.
- Ensure LEA school counselors assist and advise foster care children and youth to improve college preparation and readiness.
- Inform high school foster care youth regarding their independent status on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

### **Identification**

On the state level, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), which houses the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) periodically sends a list of children in foster care that are flagged in the GaDOE's student information system for information sharing and reporting purposes. On the local level, LEAs are now able to retrieve a list of children in foster care to better identify and provide services. LEAs are to collaborate with their local child welfare agencies and may periodically receive information directly from foster parents, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), DFCS case workers or Education Support Monitors (ESM), within the Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) unit of DFCS. Once identified, LEAs must implement its plan to ensure educational stability for children in care

### **Data Collection Requirements**

The U.S. Department of Education (US ED) requires all LEAs to submit information to determine the extent to which foster care children and youth have access to a free, appropriate, public education under Title I, Part A of ESSA. All data reported must be based on actual student enrollment. Estimated numbers are not acceptable.

For all students in foster care, LEAs must maintain disaggregated data regarding

- Information on the performance on the other academic indicator under subsection (c)(4)(B)(ii) for public elementary schools and secondary schools that are not high schools, used by the State in the State accountability system; and
- High school graduation rates, including four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and, at the State's discretion, extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates.

### **Funding**

LEAs may use Title I, Part A funding to support students in foster care, even if these students attend non-Title I schools in the LEA. LEAs may create a custom set-aside for supplemental academic support.

In addition to State and local funds that may be available for providing transportation, certain Federal funds (e.g. Title I, Part A) may be available to cover additional transportation costs to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin.