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POC Checklist for Decision Making: Best Interests in School of Origin Determination

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reinforces the Federal Fostering Connections legislation pertaining to foster youth remaining in their school of origin when in their best interests to do so. The Local Education Agency and Local Child Welfare (DCS) Point of Contacts (POC) will collaborate to determine foster youth best interests for the purpose of complying with the provisions set forth in the ESSA. The checklist includes, but is not limited to, all factors that must be considered in making the determination of a foster child's best interests. These factors are not listed in order of importance, as they are all equal in value.

Decisions regarding school selection should be made on a case by case basis, giving attention to the circumstances of each student. When a child is going to change residences, whether this is due to initial entry into the foster care system or a home placement change afterwards, the first key decision is whether or not the child will remain in the same school.

Some points to consider when making the best interest determination:

- How long is the placement expected to last and what is the plan for permanency?
- How many schools has the child attended this year? The past few years?
- Which school does the child prefer? Why?
- Would the timing of a transfer coincide with a logical juncture such as after testing, end of semester, or end of the school year?
- Are there medical, educational, and/or mental health issues that may impact safety during transportation?
- Is the current school receiving a failing grade?
 - If so, how are students that are demographically similar to the student performing academically?

Foster Youth: _____

Grade: _____

Placement Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

County of Wardship: _____



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Remaining in School (School of Origin) Considerations		Transferring to School (New School) Considerations	
	<p>Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served at the same school due to prior history.</i></p>		<p>Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served at a different school due to his or her history/future.</i></p>
	<p>Age and grade placement of the student <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has been in this environment for an extended period of time.</i></p>		<p>Age and grade placement of the student <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is not critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has attended the school of origin for only a brief time. The student has destructive or dangerous relationships at their school of origin.</i></p>
	<p>Academic Performance <i>The child's academic performance is weak, and the child would fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.</i></p>		<p>Academic Performance <i>The child's academic performance is strong and at grade level and the child would likely recover academically from a school transfer.</i></p>
	<p>Social and emotional state <i>The child does not adjust well to change, has developed strong ties to the current school, does not want to leave, or involved in school related or extra-curricular activities.</i></p>		<p>Social and emotional state <i>The child seems to have the coping skills to adequately adjust to change, does not feel strong ties to the current school, does not mind transferring to another school, or is not involved in school related or extra-curricular activities.</i></p>
	<p>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs <i>The advantage of remaining in the school of origin outweighs any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.</i></p>		<p>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs <i>Shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The new school can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.</i></p>
	<p>Personal safety of the student <i>The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.</i></p>		<p>Personal safety of the student <i>The new school has advantages for the safety of the student.</i></p>
	<p>Student's need for special instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the school of origin.</i></p>		<p>Student's need for special instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the new school.</i></p>
	<p>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary or permanent location <i>The student's current living situation is outside the school of origin attendance area, but his/her living situation or location continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by remaining in the school of origin.</i></p>		<p>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary or permanent location <i>The student's current living situation appears to be stable and unlikely to change suddenly. The student will benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in his or her community.</i></p>
	<p>Academic Performance Ranking <i>The school of origin has a higher academic performance ranking than the transferring school; or, the school of origin is in Program Improvement, but the student is connected (academically or socially) to the school, which outweighs transferring to a new school or higher performing school.</i></p>		<p>Academic Performance Ranking <i>The transferring school has a higher academic performance ranking; or, the school of origin is in Program Improvement and the new school can provide more academic support services and greater opportunities than the school of origin.</i></p>

Summary of reason DCS is proposing the child's best interests either require a transfer or will remain in their school of origin:

Acknowledgement of discussion and checklist completion:

DCS FCM initials Date DCS POC designee initials Date

Summary of reason Local Education Agency is proposing the child's best interests either require a transfer or will remain in their school of origin:

By affixing their signatures below, the POC for each agency agree they have collaborated and reviewed the above bulleted information to determine the best interests of foster youth, _____ (DOB _____).

The youth will be transferred to or remain enrolled in _____ School Corporation with transportation provided per ESSA within 5 instructional days of final decision of best interests. The transportation plan will be as follows:

LEA POC signature Date DCS POC designee signature Date

Please check this box if the Local Education Agency POC disagrees with the proposed best interest determination by DCS and the dispute resolution process is being requested.

Date Sent to Local School POC to initiate collaboration: _____

Date Returned to DCS POC: _____

Date School Notification Form 47412 sent: _____