**Local Transportation Plan for Students in Foster Care**

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**Local Education Agency (LEA) Department of Social Services (DSS)**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires LEAs and child welfare agencies (i.e., Departments of Social Services) to collaborate to ensure the educational stability of foster care children and youth. To address transportation for students in foster care cost-effectively, the local LEA and DSS agency must establish formal written protocols and procedures to ensure that foster care students remain in their school of origin whenever it is determined to be in their best interest. To do so, DSS must regularly inform LEAs of all foster care youth enrolled in an LEA.

The local transportation plan must be collaboratively designed between the LEA and DSS to appropriately reflect the unique local context. It is recommended that the LEAs and DSS agency consider previous scenarios, as well as low-cost/no-cost options when designing the joint transportation plan to limit the educational disruption for students in foster care.

Note: LEAs should consider developing transportation plans with other LEAs or DSS agencies, both in-state (between different LEAs and DSS agencies) and out-of-state, with which they frequently interact regarding students in foster care.

**1. Please indicate the LEA and DSS representative(s) included in the design of this local transportation plan.**

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| **Local Education Agency**  **Representative Names** | **Position Title** | **Email Address and Phone Number** |
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| **Department of Social Services Representative Names** | **Position Title** | **Email Address and Phone Number** |
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**2. Address transportation assurances to ensure educational stability for children and youth in foster care.**

Please describe, in detail, your collaboratively designed transportation procedures governing how transportation to maintain students in foster care in their school of origin when in their best interest, will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the time in foster care (ESEA 112 (c)(5)(B)). The purpose of establishing uniform local transportation procedures is to ensure that every student in foster care receives a consistent, fair assessment.

A. Please describe, in detail, the step-by-step procedures the LEA and DSS agency will follow up to **promptly provide** transportation for children and youth in foster care.

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B. Please describe, in detail, the step-by-step procedures the LEA and DSS agency will follow to **promptly arrange** transportation for children and youth in foster care.

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C. Please describe, in detail, the step-by-step procedures the LEA and DSS agency will follow to ensure the transportation is **funded** cost-effectively and per section 475 (4)(A) of the Social Security Act. (Please see the ED/HHS Joint Guidance, p.16, and the NC DHHS/NCDPI Joint Guidance, p. 8.)

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**3. Address additional costs**

As part of developing and implementing transportation procedures, the LEA and DSS must address any additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain students in foster care in the school of origin. Given the emphasis on shared responsibility, the LEA and DSS agency should make every possible effort to reach an agreement regarding how transportation should be funded if there are additional costs. (Please refer to ED/HHS Joint Guidance, p. 17-19, questions 22, 27,28, and 29, and the NC DHHS/NCDPI Joint Guidance, p. 8.)

Note: LEAs, including the school district of origin, the school district of residence, and the placing DSS agency, may agree to pay for or share the costs of providing transportation to the school of origin. LEAs may include these scenarios in their plans as a method to address additional costs.

Note: LEAs may use Title I funds to pay for additional costs needed to transport children in foster care to their school of origin. However, Title IA funds reserved for students experiencing homelessness may not be used to serve students in foster care.

If additional costs are incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the LEA will provide such transportation if (please complete the relevant field):

1. The local DSS agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the cost of such transportation. Please describe the circumstances and procedures for when the DSS agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the additional cost of transportation.

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1. The LEA agrees to pay for the cost. Please describe the circumstances and procedures for when the LEA agrees to pay for the additional costs.

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1. The LEA and DSS agency agree to share the cost. Please describe the circumstances and procedures for when the LEA and DSS agency agree to share the additional costs.

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**4. Consider low-cost or no-cost transportation options for foster care**

On a case-by-case student basis, additional low-cost or no-cost options for the transportation of students in foster care should be explored. Please review the following no-cost or low-cost options for transportation and indicate with a check mark if the LEA and/or DSS agree to explore these transportation funding options on a case-by-case basis.

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| **No-cost or low-cost options** | **LEA** | **DSS Agency** |
| The child may be dropped off at a school bus stop near the existing transportation system for the school of origin. Communication between the current and new school districts is critical. A **safe** plan for this is required (i.e., the student is appropriately supervised during transitions). |  |  |
| Public transportation options exist, and the student is of an appropriate age and has, or can acquire, the skills to utilize such options. A **safe** plan for this is required (i.e., the student is appropriately supervised during transitions). |  |  |
| The foster parents or other family member(s) are willing and able to transport the student to school. |  |  |
| The student is already eligible for transportation covered by other programs. For example, Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) funds may be used to pay for transportation services if the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team determines transportation is a related service that is required for a student with disabilities in foster care to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). |  |  |
| There are pre-existing bus routes or stops close to the new foster care placement that cross district boundaries, such as bus routes for magnet schools and transportation for homeless students as required by the McKinney-Vento Act. |  |  |
| The school district of foster residence, school district of origin, and placing DSS agency may be willing to share transportation costs. |  |  |

Please describe any additional low-cost or no-cost options for transportation of students in foster care that may be unique to your local context.

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**5. Describe a local transportation dispute resolution process between the LEA and DSS agency.**

Local transportation plans/procedures should include a dispute resolution process to address how the transportation requirement will be met if parties cannot agree. LEAs must ensure that a child in foster care remains in their school of origin while any disputes regarding transportation costs are being resolved. ESEA 1111(g)(1)(E)(i) and 1112(c)(5)(B)(i).

Please describe your local transportation dispute resolution process.

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**Authorized Signature for LEA Date**

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**Authorized Signature for DSS Date**

**Best practice recommends that this local transportation plan be reviewed or revised annually or more frequently, as needed.**