



Point Isabel Independent School District
Transportation Procedures for Students in Foster Care
Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015

National research shows children in foster care are at high-risk of dropping out of school and are unlikely to attend or graduate from college. Frequent mobility of students in foster care is a barrier to their academic success. The *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA) requires that school districts and child welfare agencies collaborate to develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin during the time students are in foster care when it is in their best interest.

Under ESSA, District transportation procedures ensuring educational stability must:

- Ensure that children in foster care needing transportation to the school of origin will promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with the child welfare agency’s authority to use child welfare funding for school of origin transportation;
- Ensure that **if** there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, the district will provide transportation to the school of origin **if**:
 - The local child welfare agency agrees to **reimburse** the LEA for the cost of such transportation;
 - The district **agrees** to pay for the cost of such transportation; or
 - The district and the local child welfare agency **agree** to share the cost of such transportation.

Development of the local plan included the following participants:

<u>Title/Role of Participant in Plan Development:</u>	<u>Name of Participant:</u>
Deputy Superintendent for Business and Operation	Henry LeVrier
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction	Ana Holland
McKinney-Vento/Foster Care Liaison	Ana Holland
Director of Transportation	Ernie Mata
Coordinator for Special Education	Juan Lopez
Representative from the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS)	Jannette M. Sanchez

PROCESS:

1. When a student is placed in foster care or changes residence while in foster care, the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) personnel must notify the District Foster Care Liaison. If the new residence is not in the same school boundary, the District Foster Care Liaison must be notified and invited to participate in the Best Interest Determination (BID).
2. Upon receipt of the invitation to participate in the BID, the District Foster Care Liaison notifies the Department of Transportation designee.
 - a. The District Foster Care Liaison should provide the student's name, current school, new residence address, and whether the student has an IEP with specialized transportation.
 - b. The school of origin transportation designee identifies potential ways that the child could be transported (see list of options below) if the BID results in a decision to maintain the current school enrollment. This information is given to the District Foster Care Liaison to include in the process.
3. The DFPS personnel, District Foster Care Liaison, and other essential members of BID share their information. The joint decision is made by the DFPS personnel and the District Foster Care Liaison.
4. If the BID decision is that the student will remain in the school of origin, the District Foster Care Liaison notifies the Department of Transportation designee, who then arranges transportation to and from school.

Options

Multiple factors will be considered and addressed in the BID when determining transportation options for foster care students, including: safety for the student and other students being transported; student age; length of commute; and distance. Information from the Department of Transportation designee about these factors will be provided so that the process will be comprehensive and will include consideration of cost-effective measures.

The following options will be considered to provide school of origin transportation:

1. An existing bus route can be used.
2. An existing bus route can be modified slightly to accommodate the new address.
3. Specialized transportation offered to other students can be accessed, such as:
 - a. Special Education
 - b. McKinney Vento transportation
4. Existing special education transportation can be modified slightly to accommodate the new address
5. Arranging transportation by the foster parent or caregiver to the school of origin or to a bus stop on a route to the school of origin;

6. Arranging transportation by a relative or another adult approved by DFPS with whom the student has a relationship and whose existing commute aligns with the student's transportation need to the school of origin or a bus stop on a route to the school of origin;
7. Coordinating with the district in which the student is living to provide transportation to the District boundaries or an existing bus stop within the District;
8. If the child's new placement address is located within a 2-mile radius of the school of origin the foster parent or designated group staff is responsible for taking the child to school of origin.

FUNDING:

If the student has an IEP that includes provisions for specialized transportation, transportation must be provided by the District responsible for the student's Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Based on special education regulations, any alternative special education placement, whether public or private, assumes specialized transportation is part of the IEP. If the **District** can offer an existing means of transportation at no additional cost, the DFPS will not be charged.

If the **District** can provide transportation but will need to modify a route or create a new option, the Department of Transportation will calculate the cost that will be charged to the DFPS. This calculation is not required until the BID process has been completed and the decision to maintain the school of origin enrollment is made. The DFPS personnel should explore whether the student is eligible for Title IV-E funds to be used to cover the cost.

The District and DFPS have identified the following funding options that may be implemented if additional costs to transport a student in foster care to the school of origin are determined:

- Cost sharing between the District and DFPS through use of a specific transportation strategy in which each party is responsible for a segment of the transportation;
- Offset of costs of DFPS, such as using Title IV-E funds paid to a foster parent or caregiver for transportation;
- Cost sharing between the school district of attendance and the school district where the student is living;
- Use of the District's Title I funds;
- Use of Medicaid reimbursements if an IEP for a student receiving special education services will include transportation as a related service;
- Use of any available grant funds.