



Child Welfare Professionals and the School System

WE HAVE THE SAME GOALS.
LET'S WORK TOGETHER AND
GET THEM ACCOMPLISHED!



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
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WHO IS HERE? REPRESENT!

WHAT AGENCY ARE YOU WITH AND WHAT IS YOUR
ROLE WITHIN THE AGENCY?

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE?



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OBJECTIVES

- Discuss school-based supports and services available for students in Foster Care
- Review barriers and strategies for attendance of Foster Care youth.
- Review requirements for a collaborative approach to include school-based staff in the ESSA Multi-Disciplinary transition staffing
- Become knowledgeable of the Learnfare Process between the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the school districts.



POLICY

- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Public Law 114-95.
- 65A-4.2131, F.A.C., Learnfare Requirements
- 65C-28.018, F.A.C., Meeting the Child's Educational Needs
- 39.0016, F.S., Education of abused, neglected, and abandoned children; agency agreements; children having or suspected of having a disability
- 39.4023, F.S., Placement and Education transitions; transition plans
- Section 1003.21(1), F.S., School Attendance



WHY SHOULD WE COLLABORATE?

Who Benefits?

- Collaboration between Agency staff and school district staff is instrumental in the success of students in Foster Care.
- Children in foster care are more likely than children and youth who are not involved in child welfare to have been exposed to trauma, change schools, placement changes, less stability, and less likely to have access to evaluations and updated information for comprehensive assessments.
- Collaboration will result in less traumatic transitions for students, better communication between agencies and schools, and positive educational outcomes for students.
- **Hope Florida - A Pathway to Prosperity:** Uniting communities through 'Hope Navigators' to guide Floridians on an individualized path to prosperity, economic self-sufficiency and hope. Referrals to local, community-based partners.



INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT

Local liaison team. Do you know who you can contact at your Community Based Care (CBC) level and school level for assistance?

- DCF shall appoint at least a representative in each circuit from its community-based care agencies who will participate on behalf of children known to DCF.
- Department of Education (DOE) shall appoint a representative to a local liaison team.
- The local liaison teams shall work to achieve appropriate education for the children known to the DCF and shall work cooperatively to resolve systemic issues statewide and locally, as well as any individual youth-specific issues.



WHAT ARE EARLY WARNING INDICATORS?

Early warning system.—

1. A school that serves any students in kindergarten through grade 8 shall implement an early warning system to identify students in such grades who need additional support to improve academic performance and stay engaged in school. The early warning system must include the following early warning indicators:
 - a. Attendance below 90 percent, regardless of whether absence is excused or a result of out-of-school suspension.
 - b. One or more suspensions, whether in school or out of school.
 - c. Course failure in English Language Arts or mathematics during any grading period.
 - d. A Level 1 score on the statewide, standardized assessments in English Language Arts or mathematics or, for students in kindergarten through grade 3, a substantial reading deficiency under s. 1008.25(5)(a).

When a student exhibits two or more of the early warning indicators, a school-based team must convene to determine the appropriate intervention for the student. The school will provide the parent or guardian with at least a 10-day written notice of meeting that includes the purpose, time and location, in order to give the parent an opportunity to participate, pursuant to s. 1001.42(18)(b)(2), F.S.



REVIEW BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES FOR ATTENDANCE OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH

- If a student has had at least five unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a 90-calendar-day period, the student's primary teacher shall report to the school principal or his or her designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal shall, unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the school's child study team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. Per s. [1003.26\(1\)\(b\)](#), F.S.

Example: This would apply to a foster care youth on runaway or not attending school regularly

- If the child study team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential remedies, and the principal shall notify the district school superintendent and the school district contact for home education programs that the referred student is exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. Per s. [1003.26\(1\)\(b\)](#), F.S.



CASE STAFFING (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

Under the direction of the district school superintendent, a designated school representative shall give written notice that requires enrollment or attendance within 3 days after the date of notice, in person or by return-receipt mail, to the parent when no valid reason is found for a student's nonenrollment in school. If the notice and requirement are ignored, the designated school representative shall report the case to the district school superintendent, and may refer the case to the case staffing committee, established pursuant to s. 984.12, F.S.

- The composition of the case staffing committee shall be based on the needs of the family and child. It shall include a representative from the child's school district and a representative of the Department of Juvenile Justice, and may include a supervisor of the department's contracted provider; a representative from the area of health, mental health, substance abuse, social or educational services; a representative of the state attorney; the alternative sanctions coordinator; and any person recommended by the child, family, or department, Per s. 984.12, F.S.



MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TRANSITION (MDT) STAFFING AND PLANNING.

- Every effort must be made to keep a child in the school of origin if it is in the child's best interest. Any placement decision must include thoughtful consideration of which school a child will attend if a school change is necessary.
- The determination of whether it is in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, and if not, of which school the child will attend in the future, must be made in consultation with the following individuals, including, but not limited to:

Child;

Parents;

Caregiver;

Child Welfare Professional;

Guardian ad Litem, if appointed;

Educational surrogate, if appointed;

Child-care and educational staff, including teachers and guidance counselors; The multidisciplinary team may rely on a report from the child's current school or program district and, if applicable, any other school district being considered for the educational placement if the required school personnel are not available to attend the multidisciplinary team staffing in person or remotely.

School district representative or foster care liaison



FACTORS TO CONSIDER DURING MDT STAFFING

When determining whether remaining in the school or program of origin is in the child's best interest or, if not, when selecting a new school or program:

- Child's desire to remain in the school or program of origin.
- Preference of the child's parents or legal guardians.
- Whether the child has siblings, close friends, or mentors at the school or program of origin.
- Child's cultural and community connections in the school or program of origin.
- Whether the child is suspected of having a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or has begun receiving interventions under this state's multitiered system of supports.
- Whether the child is an English Language Learner student and is receiving language services and, if so, whether those required services are available in a school or program other than the school or program of origin.
- Impact a change to the school or program of origin would have on academic credits and progress toward promotion.
- Availability of extracurricular activities important to the child.
- Child's known individualized educational plan or other medical and behavioral health needs and whether such plan or needs are able to be met at a school or program other than the school or program of origin.
- Child's permanency goal and timeframe for achieving permanency.
- Child's history of school transfers and how such transfers have impacted the child academically, emotionally, and behaviorally.
- Length of the commute to the school or program from the child's home or placement and how such commute would impact the child.
- Length of time the child has attended the school or program of origin.
- Cost of transportation **cannot** be a factor in making a best interest determination.



SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

- Individuals responsible for problem solving and facilitating appropriate interventions. May include the teacher, school counselor, school social worker, school nurse, school psychologist, and other school administrator.
- Adequately and efficiently problem solve student referrals.
- Child Welfare Professional can schedule a meeting
- Initial contact would be made with the school counselor.
- Can address tutoring, change in classroom and if evaluations are needed.



EDUCATION TRANSITION PLAN

The Department or the Community-Based Care lead agency shall create and implement an individualized education transition plan:

- Child-care and early education programs, **when it does not involve a placement change.**

Note: If it does involve a placement change the education information will be included as part of the Multi-disciplinary staffing.



WHAT IS LEARNFARE?

- The Learnfare Program is primarily related to student attendance for families who are eligible to receive temporary cash assistance (TCA). S. 414.1251, F.S., requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to reduce the amount of TCA for families with students who are identified as habitual truants or dropouts. Implementation procedures require DCF to provide a list of TCA-eligible children to the Northwest Regional Data Center monthly. Each school district will download the list and identify students who are truants or dropouts. The school district's response is then shared with DCF who takes the appropriate action. In response, DCF reviews the case record to make certain determinations. If good cause does not exist, the parent of a student who is a habitual truant or a dropout receives notice of possible reduction of the benefit amount. DCF procedures include a fair hearing process. If a sanction is imposed to the benefit amount, the student may be reinstated when:
 - The truant student's substantially improved attendance during a subsequent grading period is confirmed or
 - After a student who has dropped out of school reenrolls in school, receives a high school diploma or its equivalent, enrolls in preparation for the high school equivalency assessment or enrolls in another educational activity approved by the district school board.



OPEN DISCUSSION

Concerns/challenges in your areas.

- What is happening in your area?
- How is it being resolved in your area?



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



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RESOURCES

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