

FACT SHEET

Caregiver's Guide

On Pre-K12 Education and Related Services

INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet is designed to provide caregivers with information necessary to support the educational process for foster youth in Florida. Effective parenting by caregivers requires a loving commitment to the child, and to the child's safety and well-being. Well-being is supported, in part, by the caregiver's attention to the child's education. Children learn from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, beliefs, as well as the words and actions of parents, caregivers, and case managers. When we demonstrate that education is a priority, children are more likely to do the same.

PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ARE THE FIRST TEACHERS

- ✓ Reading ability is strongly related to academic and vocational success. Helping a child with language development, as early as possible, can improve the child's opportunity for success in school.
- ✓ Sharing stories, songs, and books with a child helps develop literacy skills and sends a strong message that learning to read and write is important.

SCHOOL READINESS

"School Readiness" refers to the development of certain basic skills that a child needs in order to learn. For additional information on this subject, please visit the Ounce of Prevention website at <http://www.ounce.org> and the Early Learning Coalition website at <http://www.elcofnwflorida.org> and <http://www.elcbigbend.org>.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT and ATTENDANCE

- ✓ **Florida law requires** each child in care be immediately enrolled in school. A standard registration form has been developed to facilitate enrollment. You may obtain this form from the child's case manager.
- ✓ **On Time, Every Day:** All children/youth must attend school **regularly**. It is imperative to make getting the child to school on time a priority.
- ✓ **School Policies:** Each school district develops a policy for school attendance. Feel free to ask for a copy of the attendance policy from the school and follow the established policies and procedures.
- ✓ **Excused Absences:** At the beginning of the school year, or when the child is initially enrolled at the school, request a school calendar. Alert the school and the child's teachers about anything significant going on in the student's life that may affect school performance and/or result in absences.

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

- ✓ Involvement with a child's school by parents, foster parents, and caregivers makes a positive difference in educational outcomes of children in care.
- ✓ Encouraging the child to participate in school-related events and activities, as well as providing transportation, is one way that a foster parent can make a difference. When a parent or caregiver is personally involved in these activities, it sends a powerful message to the children.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS/EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Enroll your child in afterschool programs. They typically provide fun, safe, and constructive environments lead by caring professionals to successfully bridge the time between the regular school day and home.
- ✓ Afterschool and extracurricular activities can enhance and reinforce academic lessons learned while also providing social and emotional growth opportunities.

For more information about the education of students in Foster Care, contact:



Bureau of Exceptional Education & Student Services
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 644
Phone: (850) 245-7851
<http://www.fl DOE.org/ese/StudentSupport.asp>



GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduation requirements may vary from year to year. Ask the school counselor or visit Florida's Guide to Public High School Graduation at <http://www.fldoe.org/BII/StudentPro/pdf/HSbrochure.pdf> for current information regarding graduation requirements.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

- ✓ Florida has a variety of standardized assessments including the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), Florida Writes, and End of Course exams. For more information about the FCAT, please view the following links: <http://fcap.fldoe.org/default.asp> and <http://fcap.fldoe.org/fcat2/>.
- ✓ Many schools provide support and information to students/parents regarding reducing test-taking anxiety. Ask a teacher or school counselor about specific test taking tips for your child.
- ✓ National Standardized Tests: The Pre-SAT test determines eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Program. The Pre-ACT test is also a valuable tool for students to see their strengths and weaknesses so they can develop a plan for success when they take the SAT or ACT. **Any child who is eligible for free or reduced lunch may receive a voucher/fee waiver for the SAT and ACT tests.**

HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- ✓ **Dual enrollment** is an acceleration program that allows high school students to simultaneously earn credit toward high school completion and a career certificate, or an associate or baccalaureate degree at a Florida public institution.
- ✓ Most high schools offer **Advanced Placement (AP)** classes that allow students to take college-level courses at the high school.
- ✓ The **International Baccalaureate (IB) program** is a pre-university program for highly motivated secondary school students to earn college credit. A diploma that allows graduates access to universities worldwide is awarded at the completion of the IB program.
- ✓ **Virtual School:** Florida now provides e-learning, either full-time or on a course-by-course basis, to fill educational gaps or serve a student's unique needs.
- ✓ **General Educational Development (or GED)** tests are a group of five subject tests that, when passed, certify the taker has American high school-level academic skills. The GED is the equivalent of earning a high school diploma, called a GED certificate or credential.
- ✓ **Performance-Based Exit Option** is an alternative route to graduation for eligible students who may not graduate with their cohort group because of credit deficiency, low grade point average, or being overage for their grade.

SCHOOL CONFERENCING

- ✓ **Schools welcome the opportunity** to meet with parents (and guardians such as foster parents and relative caregivers). Regular communications with teachers and school staff can facilitate better student achievement.
- ✓ **Schedule a conference** through the school's guidance counselor upon receiving the child into your care or if problems arise at a later time. Counselors are well equipped to resolve all school related issues.
- ✓ **Poor academic performance and/or behavior** may be reasons to request a conference or additional support from the school. Florida public schools use a Problem-Solving / Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) process to meet student needs. For more information on PS/RtI visit <http://www.florida-rti.org>.

WHEN A CHILD HAS, OR IS SUSPECTED OF HAVING, A DISABILITY THAT AFFECTS LEARNING OR ACCESS TO LEARNING

- ✓ A *disability* interferes with learning or access to learning. It can include: emotional, behavioral, learning/processing, cognitive, health, or developmental issues.
- ✓ If you suspect a child may have a disability, ask the school for help. Parents (caregivers) or teachers may request referrals for assessments. For children receiving Pre-K services, ask the Early Learning Coalition to assist. In all cases, keep the child's case manager informed.