



GOAL 1 School Stability

Educators' Roles

Blueprint Tools

Youth Are Entitled to Remain in Their Same School When Feasible

Youth in foster care move between living placements an average of once or twice a year. These moves often require children to change schools. School moves can result in academic problems, grade retention, and increased dropout rates.¹ Read the following tips to find out how you can help. Check the resource boxes for useful programs and publications.

What you can do:

- ✓ **Help your child welfare agency identify more foster families within your school or district.** Lead efforts at your school to let parents know that children at the school need foster homes and placements to allow them to keep attending school there. Raise the issue at staff meetings, PTA gatherings, or other school-sponsored social events. Consider inviting a child welfare agency representative to a school event to speak about foster parenting. Have a list of parents in the school who are foster parents so when a crisis occurs, you can help the child welfare caseworker identify potential placement options. If you know the child, you may be able to suggest options (e.g., coach, friend's parent).
- ✓ **Know who is authorized to make educational decisions for the child.** Often, educators are unsure who can make decisions for children in foster care. Ask the caseworker, child's attorney, or CASA to help determine who can make those decisions. If the child does not have an existing education decision maker, advocate for one to be appointed. For more information on education decision makers for children receiving special education, see our fact sheet for educators at www.abanet.org/child/education/publications.shtml.
- ✓ **Even if the child must move to a home in a different school district, request that the child remain in your school if it is in the child's best interest.** Child welfare agencies are now required, under federal law, to work with schools to keep a child in the same school even when the child moves outside the school area, when it is the child's best interest to do so. Advocate for favorable school policies that assure the school supports these new mandates. The McKinney-Vento Act also provides that youth "awaiting foster care placement" have the right to remain in their school of origin after they move when "feasible." Some states interpret McKinney-Vento broadly to include nearly all youth in the foster care system; other states may have different or additional protections. Work with the McKinney-Vento liaison to see whether the law can be used to help the child maintain school stability.

Promote policies that support education stability.

The Blueprint for Change: Educational Success for Children in Out-of-Home Care provides a more detailed guide on the benchmarks for meeting the educational needs of youth in care, as well as national state and local examples of how various jurisdictions are meeting these needs. Use the Blueprint as a guide to assessing your jurisdiction's policies. Contact the Legal Center for support promoting educational success for youth in your jurisdiction.
E-mail: cceducation@abanet.org

- ✓ **When a child remains in your school despite a living placement move, ensure that the child has transportation to school.** Child welfare agencies can access federal funding to help support reasonable travel to a child’s school. When a child is eligible under McKinney-Vento, the school district is required to fund transportation to the original school. Work with child welfare, the school district, foster parents and other concerned adults to come up with a transportation plan for the child.

Endnotes

¹ National Working Group on Foster Care and Education. *Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster and Out-of-Home Care*, September 2007. Available at www.abanet.org/child/education/home.shtml.

Resources:

- ✓ **To determine which school is in a child’s best interests**, review the National Center for Homeless Education’s checklist, available at www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/sch_sel_checklist.pdf. It is created for homeless youth, but can guide decisions for youth in care as well.
- ✓ **For information about appointing education decision makers and dealing with confidentiality issues**, see *Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care*, available at www.abanet.org/child/education/mythbusting2.pdf
- ✓ **For practical suggestions to help children in foster care placed in your school or classroom**, see:
 - *What Teachers and Educators Can Do to Help Youth in Foster Care*, available at www.fostercaremonth.org/GetInvolved/Toolkit/Support/Documents/FCM08%20What%20Teachers%20and%20Educators%20Can%20Do.pdf
 - *Why Special Education Teachers Should Care About Foster Care*, available at www.ldonline.org/article/5610
- ✓ **For strategies on how to use “awaiting foster care placement” and the McKinney Vento Act and examples of successful collaborations between child welfare and education agencies**, see *The McKinney-Vento Act and Children and Youth Awaiting Foster Care Placement*, available at www.abanet.org/child/education/naehcy_%20mckinney_vento.pdf

This information is adapted from the **Blueprint for Change: Educational Success for Youth in the Child Welfare System**, published by the **Legal Center for Foster Care and Education**. To see the full publication, use a searchable database on foster care education laws, and access secondary sources and training materials, visit www.abanet.org/child/education/home.shtml.