

Arizona Department of Education's Foster Care Education Program

School Stability

The Arizona Department of Education's (ADE) Foster Care Education Program was birthed out of the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA) Title I, Part A [school stability provisions](#). Through the language of this federal education legislation, students in foster care have the right to remain in their school of origin. Local Educational Agencies (LEA) need to collaborate with the child welfare agency (CWA) to ensure that students in foster care receive transportation to their school of origin. If it is not in the best interest for the student in foster care to remain in their school of origin, that student in foster care should be immediately enrolled into the new school.

Eligibility & Definitions

Students are considered to be in *foster care* if they meet the criteria detailed in the federal definition of foster care.

[Foster care](#) is defined as 24-hour (a day)* substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency (Department of Child Safety, tribal foster care, or a local child welfare agency)* has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.**

*Parentheses added for clarity.

**Taken from the Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Guidance on the Foster Care Provisions in Title I, Part A of ESSA.

Another important change from ESSA states that 'awaiting foster care placement' be removed from the definition of 'homeless children and youths' found in the McKinney-Vento Act; thus students in foster care are their own population now within the school system. Schools need to identify their students in foster care for the purposes of reporting student achievement data, graduation rate, and to implement the ESSA school stability provisions.

[School of origin](#) is defined as the school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of the placement change.

Collaboration

ESSA states that points of contact (POC) be designated from both the CWA & the LEA to facilitate collaboration. The LEA POC (or foster care liaison) may also serve as both the foster care liaison and the McKinney-Vento liaison. Click on the links below to locate the appropriate contact:

[CWA POCs](#)

[LEA POCs](#) (also referred to as foster care liaisons)

The CWA leads the [Best Interest Determination](#) (BID) process to determine if students in foster care should remain in their school of origin or be immediately enrolled in their new school. This process should be holistic & include input from the student, biological parent/guardian, foster caregiver, school of origin, & any potential new school.

Transportation

LEAs and the CWA share the responsibility of transporting students in foster care to their school of origin. Utilize this [procedural document](#) to ensure students in foster care are transported in a cost-effective & timely manner. Within ADE's Title I monitoring, LEAs submit their [foster care transportation plans](#) every six years.

We strongly encourage educators, parents, and community members to visit [ADE's Foster Care Education Program website](#) for more information about our program. For assistance in serving students in foster care, contact ADE's Foster Care Education Coordinator, Joey Taylor at Joey.Taylor@azed.gov.