



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care Through the Best Interest Determination Process

Arizona Department of Education
Foster Care Education Program

October 8, 2026

Housekeeping Items

- If you have questions throughout today's session, please share them in the following ways:
 - Enter simple questions into the Q&A feature or type them into the chat.
 - Email FosterCare@azed.gov with any LEA-specific questions.
- Today's session is being recorded. The recording and presentation slides will be made available to attendees after the training.
- All resources referenced in this training as well as the recording and presentation slides will be shared following the session on the Arizona Foster Care Education Program website.
- All note-taking and other tools are not permitted in ADE sessions.



Marisa de la Torre

Program Specialist



Role & Responsibility

- Program Specialist in the Office of Homeless, Foster Care, Refugee, and Title I-D Programs.
- Support the field with developing informed, high-quality, and comprehensive programs to ensure that all students are provided an opportunity to succeed.

Grounding Purpose

- A high quality education is a **right**, not a **privilege**, for our students. My job is to **insist** upon this right.



Renz Narciso

Statewide Education Specialist



Role & Responsibilities

As a DCS Education Specialist, Renz supports youth in foster care and DCS staff in navigating the education system and accessing resources that promote educational stability and success. She provides consultation, training, and technical assistance related to school stability, educational rights, postsecondary planning, and available academic resources and opportunities. She also collaborates with schools, caregivers, DCS staff, and community partners to help address educational barriers and ensure youth are supported in reaching their educational goals.

Grounding Purpose

Renz's grounding purpose is to help young people feel seen, supported, and empowered in their educational journey. She believes education can create opportunity, strengthen stability, and open doors to a young person's goals and future.



Daniel Dominguez

Statewide Education Specialist



Role & Responsibilities

As a DCS Education Specialist, Danny supports youth in foster care and DCS staff in navigating the education system and accessing resources that promote educational stability and success. He provides consultation, training, and technical assistance related to school stability, educational rights, postsecondary planning, and available academic resources and opportunities. He also collaborates with schools, caregivers, DCS staff, and community partners to help address educational barriers and ensure youth are supported in reaching their educational goals.

Grounding Purpose

My experiences in the military, as a public-school teacher, and in my current position have taught me that education isn't just about academics; it's about building resilience, safety, and hope. I find my purpose in equipping the children and families we serve with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to succeed in life.



McKay Smith

Mesa Public Schools, Foster Care POC



Role & Responsibilities

As the McKinney-Vento and Foster Care Liaison for Mesa Public Schools, I work dedicatedly to ensure students experiencing housing instability or navigating the foster care system have equal access to quality education. My days are spent coordinating Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings, managing our homeless education support programs, and collaborating with families, schools, and community partners to remove barriers to student success.

Grounding Purpose

Ultimately, my mission is to provide every student with a safe, stable foundation so they can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Arizona Department of Education

The Arizona Department of Education is a service organization committed to raising academic outcomes and empowering parents.

Arizona Foster Care Education Program

The mission of the Arizona Foster Care Education Program is to ensure educational stability for students in foster care, with particular emphasis on collaboration between SEAs, LEAs, and child welfare agencies so students in foster care have the opportunity to achieve at the same high levels as their peers (20 U.S.C. §6312 (c)(5)).

Mission Statements



**Academic
Achievement**
Catherine Barrett

Character Education
Mila Makal

**Office of English
Language Acquisition
(OELAS)**
Adela Santa Cruz

**Title I & ESEA
Consolidated Unit**
Sarka White

**Office of Homeless,
Foster Care, Refugee, &
Title I-D Education
Programs**
Brittani Roy

**21st Century Community
Learning Centers (CCLC)**
Megan Cameron

Academic Achievement Division





Dr. Brittani (Didi) Roy

*Director of
Educational Policy
& Program Integrity*

Homeless Education Program



Rita Rodriguez

*Homeless Education
Program
Coordinator*



Jan Brite

*Homeless Education
Program Grants
Specialist*

Homeless, Foster Care, and Refugee Student Support



Marisa de la Torre

*Refugee Student
Support – Lead
Program Specialist*

Office of Homeless, Foster Care, Refugee, and Title I-D Programs



Objective

Attendees will...

- Understand the **responsibilities** of Local Education Agency Foster Care Points of Contact and child welfare agencies to **prepare** for and **participate** in **best interest determination** processes to ensure **educational stability** for students in foster care; and
- Recognize the **impact** that **proactive collaboration** and development of **written procedures** can have on ensuring **educational stability** measures are upheld for students in foster care.

Agenda

- Pre-Assessment
- The Impact of School Stability
- Preparing for Collaboration with Child Welfare Agencies
- Best Interest Determination Process
- Post-Assessment
- Resources and Contact Information

Pre-Assessment

Let's Begin!

Pre-Assessment

1. In which scenarios are local education agencies and child welfare agencies required to conduct a best interest determination process?
2. True or False? The Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact of the school of origin and of the new school are both required to attend and participate in the best interest determination process.
3. Within how many days of a student entering foster care or experiencing a change of foster care placement must the best interest determination process be finalized?
4. How can local education agencies and child welfare agencies collaborate to ensure the best interest determination is a student-factored and context specific decision?

Common Acronyms

- **SEA** – state education agency
 - **ADE** – Arizona Department of Education
 - **FCEP** – Arizona Foster Care Education Program
- **LEA** – local education agency
- **CWA** – child welfare agency
 - **DCS** – Arizona Department of Child Safety
- **BID** – best interest determination
- **SOO** – school of origin
- **IEP** – Individualized Education Plan
- **YAP** - Young Adult Program
- **EFC** - Extended Foster Care



Today's Session

The Impact of School Stability

- Core Components of Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care
 - Federal and State Statutory Requirements for Best Interest Determination Processes
- The Importance of Educational Stability
- 2025 BID Outcome Data

Previous Professional Learning

In case you missed it...



Federal and State Requirements to Ensure Educational Success for Students in Foster Care

Arizona Department of Education
Foster Care Education Program

September 2026

Materials from last month's professional learning session are now available on the [Arizona Foster Care Education Program website](#).

This session provides information on key requirements such as:

- The Impact of Experience in Foster Care
- Responsibilities of Arizona LEA Foster Care Points of Contact
- LEA collaboration with child welfare agencies
- School stability through the best interest determination (BID) process
- School of origin transportation
- Immediate enrollment and records transfer
- Funding services for students in foster care
- Accurate data collection and reporting

Core Components of Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care

- Under ESEA and Arizona Revised Statute, key provisions for students in foster care include:
 - Child welfare agency and education agency **points of contact**
 - Educational stability and educational success through the **best interest determination (BID) process**
 - **Transportation** to the school of origin
 - **Immediate enrollment** in a new school
 - **Collaboration** across agencies

“...ensure the **educational stability** of children in foster care, including assurances that— “(i) any such child enrolls or remains in such child’s **school of origin**, unless a determination is made that it is not in such child’s **best interest** to attend the school of origin, which decision shall be based on all factors relating to the child’s best interest...”

[\(20 U.S.C. § 6311\(g\)\(1\)\(E\)\).](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Educational Stability



“**Within five days** after a child enters foster care or if a child's placement changes, the child, if appropriate, the child's caseworker, the child's parent, guardian, custodian, caregiver or foster parent and representatives from the local education agency or the child's school of origin shall **determine if it is in the child's best interest to remain** in the child's **school of origin.**”

[\(A.R.S. § 8-530.04\(A\)\)](#)

Arizona Revised Statute

Best Interest
Determination



Educational Stability



*"Parties to the BID process must **presume** that remaining in the school of origin is in the student's best interest...", [ED and HHS Joint Non-Regulatory Guidance, 2024](#)*

“A **best interest determination (BID)** is a **process** through which educational agencies and child welfare agencies partner with **important people in a student’s life** to determine whether it is in **a student’s best interest** to remain at their **school of origin** or **change schools** [\(20 U.S.C. § 6311\(g\)\(1\)\(E\)\)](#).”

[Non-Regulatory Guidance on Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care, 2024](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Best Interest Determination



“Parties to the BID process must **presume** that remaining in the **school of origin** is in the student’s **best interest**, unless the BID suggests that attending another school, **including** any **public school** the student has **attended previously**, is in the student’s best interest.”

[Non-Regulatory Guidance on Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care, 2024](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Educational Stability





Share Your Knowledge

Why is **educational stability** an important protection for
students in foster care?

Type your
answer in
the chat!

Why is this important?

Youth in foster care may experience multiple changes to their living arrangement during their time in foster care. On average, children in foster care move 1 to 2 times per year. Multiple changes in a child's foster care living arrangement often result in changes to the school they attend.

(Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, 2005)

Safety · Accountability · Change · Family · Engagement · Compassion · Teaming · Advocacy · Equity

When a Child Moves Schools

Children who are in foster care for multiple years and those who exit foster care to adulthood experience more adverse outcomes, including loss or lack of:

- Connections to supportive adults
- Friendships
- Class credits
- Education services (in some instances)
- Involvement in extra-curricular/enrichment activities (i.e. school band, clubs, sports)

2025 BID Outcome Data

Arizona Department of Child Safety

Highlights

Total BID meetings held

1494

July- December 2025

2631

entry and placement change

Total Held



Initial Entry- BID Held



Placement Change - BID Held



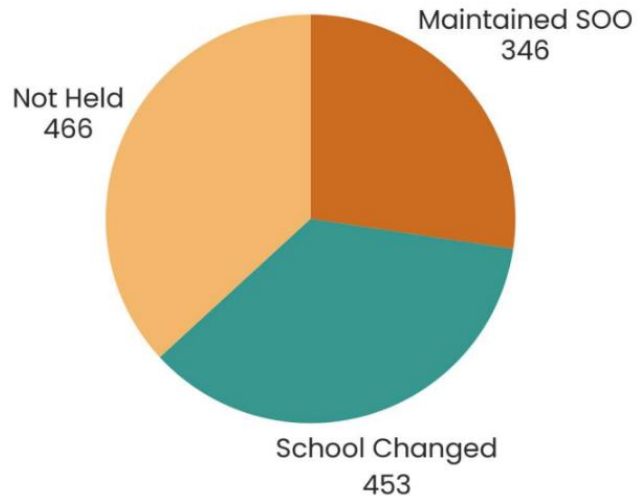
Compared to January- June 2025

- BIDs Held (total) increased by 14%
- SOO Outcomes increased by 2%

2025 BID Outcome Data

Arizona Department of Child Safety

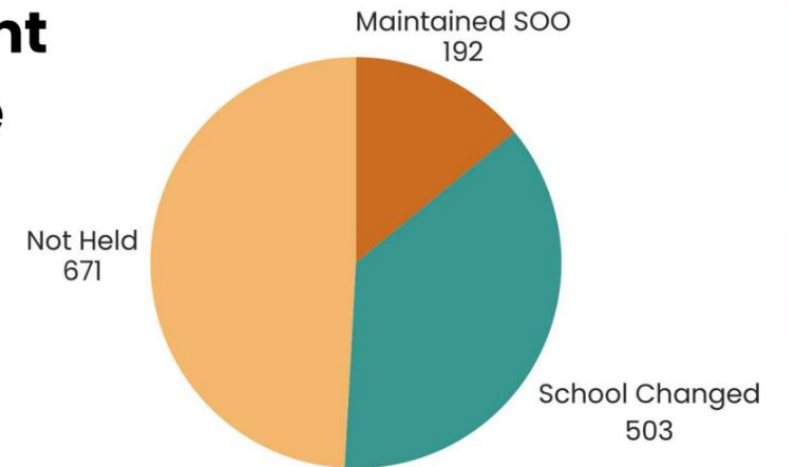
Initial Entry



Total Initial Entries: **1,265**

27% maintained enrollment at their school of origin

Placement Change



Total Placement Changes: **1,366**

14% maintained enrollment at their school of origin

2025 BID Outcome Data

Arizona Department of Child Safety

Why are best interest determination processes not being conducted?

- Child placed far away from school of origin, such as out of state
- Child welfare agency task incomplete
- Local education agency non-responsive or denied request to meet
- Child is in voluntary 90-day or congregate care placement
- Child is moved to a new placement in the same local education agency
- Child has turned 18 and has transitioned to Extended Foster Care (EFC) as a young adult
- Child's caregiver moves with the child
- Misconception about who is responsible for initiating and participating in process

In each of these situations, a best interest determination process is still required to ensure access to educational stability through maintained enrollment or supported transition to a new school!



Share Your Knowledge

Take a moment to **reflect** of the BID outcome data.

What **factors** are **within our control** to **improve** school stability outcomes for students in foster care?

Type your
answer in
the chat!

Preparing for Collaboration with Child Welfare Agencies

- Preparing to Collaborate with CWAs
 - Local Education Agency Foster Care Points of Contact
 - Written Procedures & Data Tracking
- Mesa Public Schools: Internal Tracking System
- School of Origin Transportation Shared Procedures

“LEAs must **collaborate** with child welfare agencies...strong **coordination** and **collaboration**, along with **procedures** and **policies** that reflect this collaboration, improve the educational outcomes of students in foster care.”

[Non-Regulatory Guidance on Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care, 2024](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Collaboration



“LEAs and child welfare agencies are encouraged to:

Develop a **routine** for ongoing cross-agency collaboration to implement educational stability provisions;

Establish **criteria** to be used in decision-making processes; and

Facilitate cross-systems **training** and technical assistance opportunities.”

[Non-Regulatory Guidance on Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care, 2024](#)

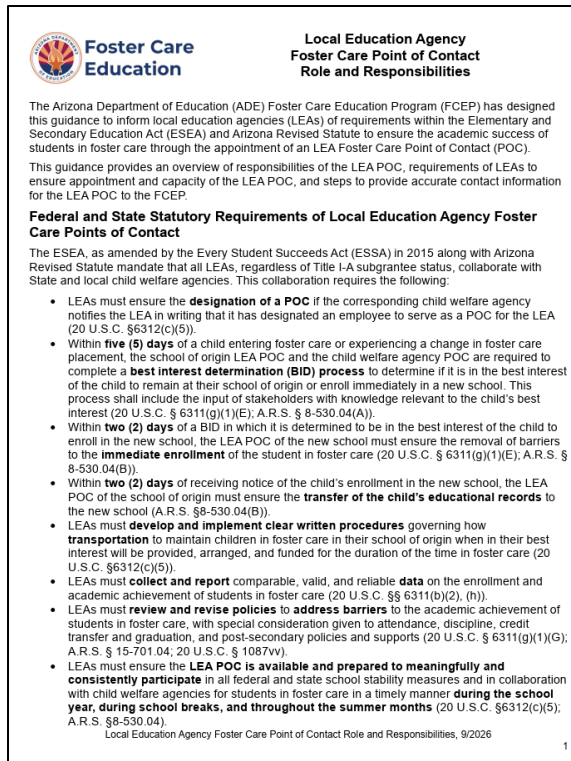
Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Collaboration



Preparing to Collaborate with CWAs

Local Education Agency Foster Care Points of Contact



Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact Role and Responsibilities Guidance Document

- New guidance document, coming soon!
- Guidance includes:
 - Federal and state requirements
 - Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact contact information details and requirements
 - Process for updating Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact contact information

[Find guidance and resources on the Arizona Foster Care Education Program webpage.](#)

Preparing to Collaborate with CWAs

Local Education Agency Foster Care Points of Contact

- LEAs must ensure the **LEA POC is available and prepared to meaningfully and consistently participate** in all federal and state school stability measures and in collaboration with child welfare agencies for students in foster care in a timely manner **during the school year, during school breaks, and throughout the summer months** (20 U.S.C. §6312(c)(5); A.R.S. §8-530.04).
- LEAs are responsible for ensuring adherence to school stability requirements and timelines for students in foster care **throughout the calendar year**, even when the designated LEA POC is unavailable during school breaks, summer months, leave, or other reason leading to their absence.
- LEA POC and responsible personnel must have the knowledge and capacity to conduct procedures for:
 - **best interest determination** processes;
 - **transportation** arrangement and cost-sharing;
 - **immediate enrollment** procedures; and
 - Other local procedures to ensure educational stability for students in foster care.

Preparing to Collaborate with CWAs

Written Procedures & Data Tracking

- **Collaborate proactively** with child welfare agencies to establish **clear written procedures** for:
 - **Newly enrolling** students in foster care
 - Enrolled student **entry** into foster care or **changes** in placement
 - Preparation for, participation in, and follow-up after **best interest determination** processes
 - Arrangement of **transportation** to the child's school of origin including cost-sharing protocol
 - Continued collaborative **support** for students in foster care to address academic, transportation, or other needs
- Develop an **internal tracking system** to keep record of services for students in foster care, such as:
 - Best interest determination details: timeline, preparational elements, outcome
 - Transportation details
 - Case notes
 - Academic and related services: IEP or 504 Plan, EL, extra-curricular involvement, graduation plan, etc.



Mesa Public Schools

BID & DATA TRACKING PROCESS

Overview

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	
1								2.52			106			139				73	36	38	28	5	2			27	202	166
2	Name / DOB / Gr	HS	SOO to SOR	1st Request	2nd Request	Meeting Date	Days to Schedule		NTP	School Invited	IEP Rec'd + Shared	SpEd Invited	No IEP	FC Emails	Enroll/Remain	WD/Not MPS		Toll of Commute	Student Preference	Not Feasible	No Connections	Placement Preference	Safety Concern	School Outcome	Keep SOO	Enroll SOR	In Synergy Done	
3																												
4																												
5	A G / 2-17-10 / Gr K		MacArthur to Glendale El																									
6	A M / 4-10-10 / Gr 3		Sun Valley to Hale																									
7	I W / 9-9-99 / Gr 5		MVT to EVIT GED																									
8	A T / 4-12-13 / Gr 9	Yes	Maricopa High to RMHS																									
9	F G / 8-4-09 / Gr 11	Yes	MVT to JO Combs	9/17/26																								
10	LS / 5-5-04 / Gr 2		Superstition to Tolleson			9/25/26																						
11	J E / 3-2-02 / Gr K	Yes	Marana to WW			9/4/26																						
12	S W / 6-6-80 / Gr 1		Robson to Robson	9/14/26		9/18/26																		Robson				
13	M O N / 8-1-13 / Gr 6		West Wing to MPS			9/22/26																		West Wing				

Student Information

Student Unique Identifier Search

Search By

☒ Person Information
 ☐ Unique ID

Legal Name

Last*

First*

Personal

Birth date*

Gender*

+ Advanced Search (optional)

Search

Reset

* required fields

Name / DOB / Gr	SOO to SOR
SC /	Leading Edge to Hughes
AL / 7-4-18 / Gr K	Hale to ?
AL / 1-1-17 / Gr 1	Hale to ?
RG @ Welcome Center	
AV	Adams to Copper Basin
AM / Gr 2	Adams to Copper Basin
AB / Gr 10	Vista Peak to MPS
VK / Gr 9	Westwood to OE McClintock
NV	Superstition to GPS
AE / 8-25-07 / Gr 10	Superstition to Canyon State
SS / 11-1-09 / Gr 10	RMHS to Mesa High
MS / 5-1-12 / Gr 8	Shepherd to Taylor
DF / Gr 7	Tucson to Poston

-Column A) It is vital to have as much information as possible for the student

-Column B) It is also important to have the correct school of origin on the BID meeting

-AzEDS Identity search can be very helpful

Meeting/Discussion Scheduling

C	D	E	F	G
				3.272988506
1st Request	2nd Request	3rd Request	Meeting Date	Days to Schedule
3/21/25				
3/21/25				
3/21/25				
3/18/25				
3/18/25				
3/18/25				
3/12/25				
3/3/25				
3/7/25	3/21/25		3/26/25	
3/18/25			3/20/25	2
3/18/25			3/20/25	2

Per Arizona state law, BID meetings must be completed within 5 days.

“Requires, within five days after entering foster care or changing placement, the child (if appropriate), the child's caseworker, the child's parent, guardian, custodian, caregiver or foster parent and representatives from the local education agency (LEA) or child's school of origin to determine if it is in the child's best interest to remain in their school of origin.”

Steps Before Meeting

H	I	J	K	L	M
		220			244
NTP	School Invited	IEP	IEP Rec'd + Shared	SpEd Invited	No IEP
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			73	36	38	28	5	2		27	202	166					
FC Emails	Enroll/ Remain	WD/Not MPS	Toll of Commute	Student Preference	Not Feasible	No Connections	Placement Preference	Safety Concern	School Outcome	Keep SOO	Enroll SOR	In Synergy/ Done	MPS FC Transport	Request Submitted	Checklist Done	Graduation Plan Done and Emailed	Notes
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Data

Y	Z
130	431
Keep SOO	Enroll SOR

25-26
23%

R	S
90	406
Keep SOO	Enroll SOR

24-25
22%

R	S
80	466
Keep SOO	Enroll SOR

23-24
17%

R	S
26	150
Remain at SOO	Enroll at SOR

22-23
17%

Ideas for Further Data

Reason for NOT
maintaining school of
origin

Number of total
school moves for
student

Number of students
enrolling with credit
deficiencies

Chronic
absenteeism

Graduation rates

School of origin
transportation (rate,
cost, etc.)

How long it takes
for full enrollment
and attendance

Educational
discontinuity (length
of school missed
due to placement)

Each LEA shall...“**collaborate** with child welfare agencies to...**develop and implement** clear written **procedures** governing how **transportation** to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin when in their best interest will be **provided, arranged, and funded** for the **duration** of the time in foster care...”

[\(20 U.S.C. § 6312\(c\)\(5\)\(B\)\)](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Transportation



“The department and educational agency shall **jointly ensure** that a child receives **transportation** to the educational institution determined to be in the **child's best interest**...and enter into necessary information sharing, data sharing and financial **agreements**.”

[\(A.R.S. § 8-530.04\(C\)\)](#)

Arizona Revised Statute

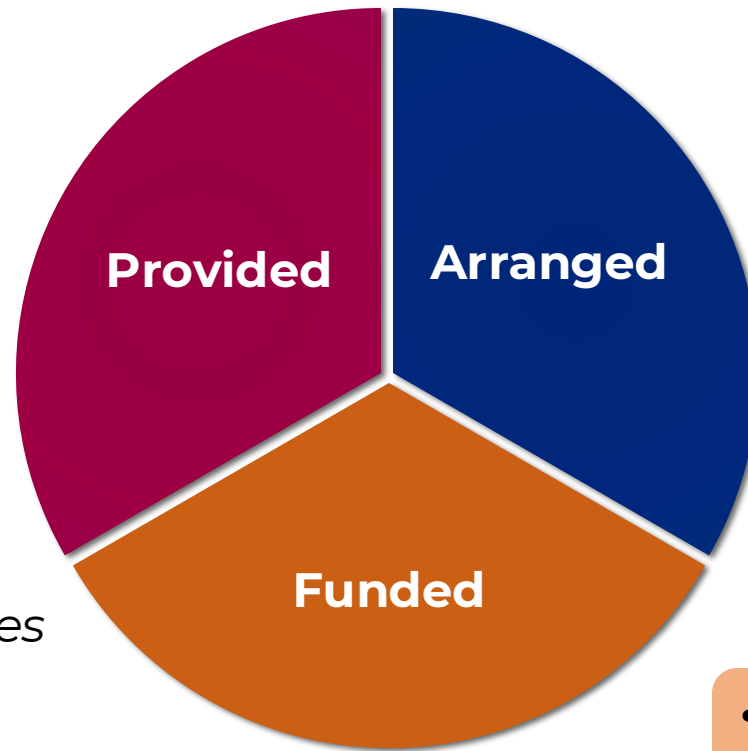
Transportation



School of Origin Transportation Shared Procedures

- Age and developmentally appropriate
- In a variety of modes
- For the duration of time in foster care

Clear, written LEA procedures must be developed in **collaboration** with child welfare agencies.



- In coordination with the child welfare agency
- Promptly; within three days of the completion of the BID
- For school, extra-curricular, and summer program attendance
- Across boundary, county, and state lines

- Cost-effective manner
- Additional cost sharing agreement

School of Origin Transportation Shared Procedures

Foster Care Transportation Procedure Document

Once a child in foster care is identified, the Local Educational Agency's (LEA) Foster Care Point of Contact (POC) shall be notified. The LEA Foster Care POC will execute the procedure for ensuring children in foster care that need transportation to their school of origin will promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 675(4)(A)) & how that transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded. Transportation to the school of origin for children in foster care is a shared responsibility between the child welfare agency & the school of origin. This collaboration requires great partnership, creative problem-solving skills, and a student-focused mindset so children in foster care would be affirmingly supported by all foster care education stakeholders.

Local Educational Agency: [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)

- School (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- LEA Foster Care POC (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- Transportation Office contact (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- Student(s) (Name and DOB): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#) Grade: [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- Placement/Caregiver (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- Child Welfare Agency (CWA) POC (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- CWA Specialist (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
- CWA Specialist's Supervisor (Name and Contact Info): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)

Foster Caregiver Address: [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)
School Address: [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)

Procedure

Is the child in foster care placed in this LEA's district boundaries (if applicable)?
YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, this LEA shall transport this child in the same manner as the rest of their students. If this LEA does not have boundaries or does not transport their students continue with this procedure.
- If no, continue with this procedure.

The sample **Foster Care Transportation Procedure Document** is designed to support local education agencies and child welfare agencies with the **development of plan** to provide transportation for a student in foster care in a **timely** and cost-effective manner. Elements include:

- Transportation modes utilized and available
- Student details, age, and other safety considerations
- Student transportation needs
- Student living arrangement considerations
- Final transportation agreement

[Find guidance and resources on the Arizona Foster Care Education Program webpage.](#)



Share Your Knowledge

What **procedures, tools, or practices** does your LEA already have in place that **enhance support** for students in foster care?

Type your
answer in
the chat!

Best Interest Determination Process

- Best Interest Determination Process
 - Deeper Understanding
 - Timeline
- Before, During, & After the BID with Arizona DCS
 - Preparation
 - Transportation
 - Immediate Enrollment
 - Transfer Credits
 - Student Success Meeting

Best Interest Determination Process

*“A BID is a **process** through which educational agencies and child welfare agencies partner with important people in a student’s life to determine whether it is in a **student’s best interest** to **remain** at their school of origin or **change** schools.”, [ED and HHS Joint Non-Regulatory Guidance, 2024](#)*

The BID is a **process, not a meeting**. While a meeting is an element of the BID process, LEAs and CWAs must ensure steps are taken before, during, and after to ensure responsible decision-making for students in foster care.

- Be prepared with procedures to collaborate before a BID process is needed
- Gather all available information, stakeholders, and perspectives before a meeting
- Engage and participate actively, considering all factors impacting the student
- Be prepared to implement follow-up steps and supports depending on the outcome
- Actively follow-up, when needed

Who?

- LEA POC at school of origin attendance is **required**
- CWA POC is **required**
- Teachers, school leaders, coaches, counselors and other individuals actively engaging with the student
- LEA POC at new school attendance is **optional**

What?

- Student and family preference
- Connection to community: staff and peers
- Extracurricular involvement
- Services to meet student's needs
- History of school changes

When?

- In Arizona, the best interest determination must take place within five (5) days of a student's placement in foster care or change in placement.

How?

- "Student-centered and context-specific"
- Presume that remaining in the school of origin is in the student's best interest.
- Children and youth must remain in their school of origin for the duration of the best interest determination process, with transportation, if needed.

Best Interest Determination Process

When is a BID needed?

The BID process should occur when a child physically changes from one foster placement to another.

A BID process does not need to happen when a child reunifies (or is in a transition plan) with a parent/legal guardian.

Best Interest Determinations Continued

A BID process is not necessary when a child is changing schools for any reason other than an initial placement in foster care or a placement change.

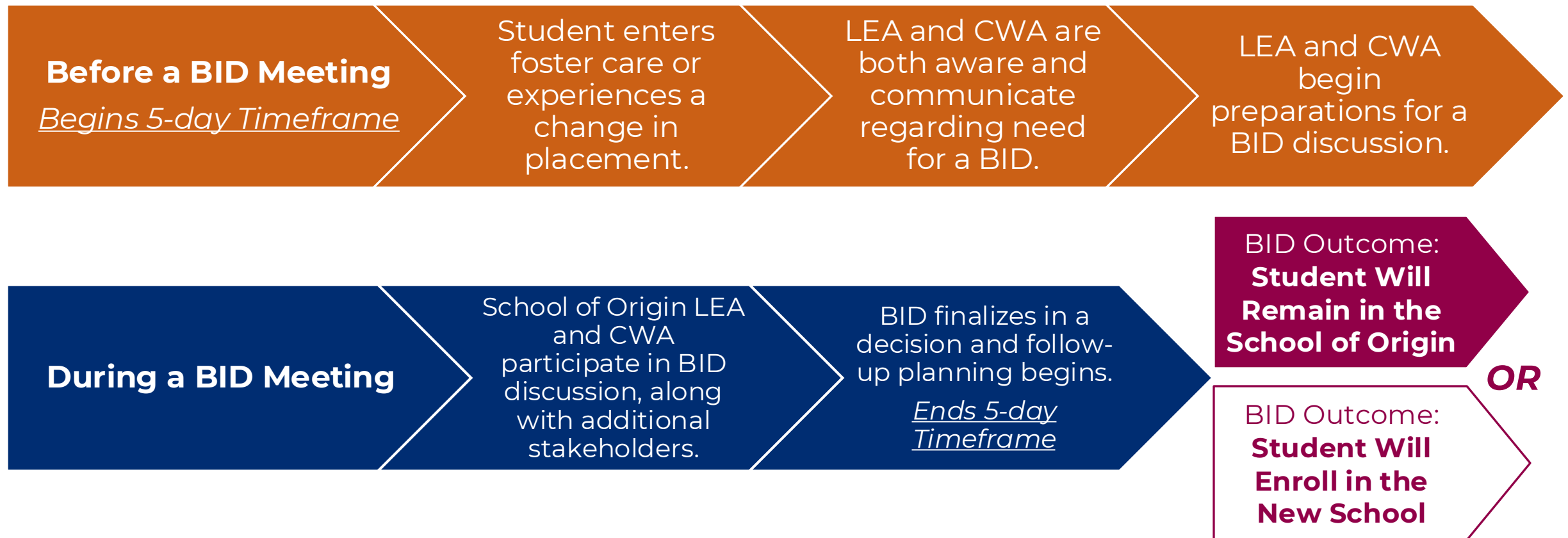
- Example 1: A child is transitioning to online schooling for the 2025-2026 school year for credit recovery.
- Example 2: A BID process is not necessary when a child is changing schools at the end of the school year.

It would be in the best interest of the child to hold a student success meeting.

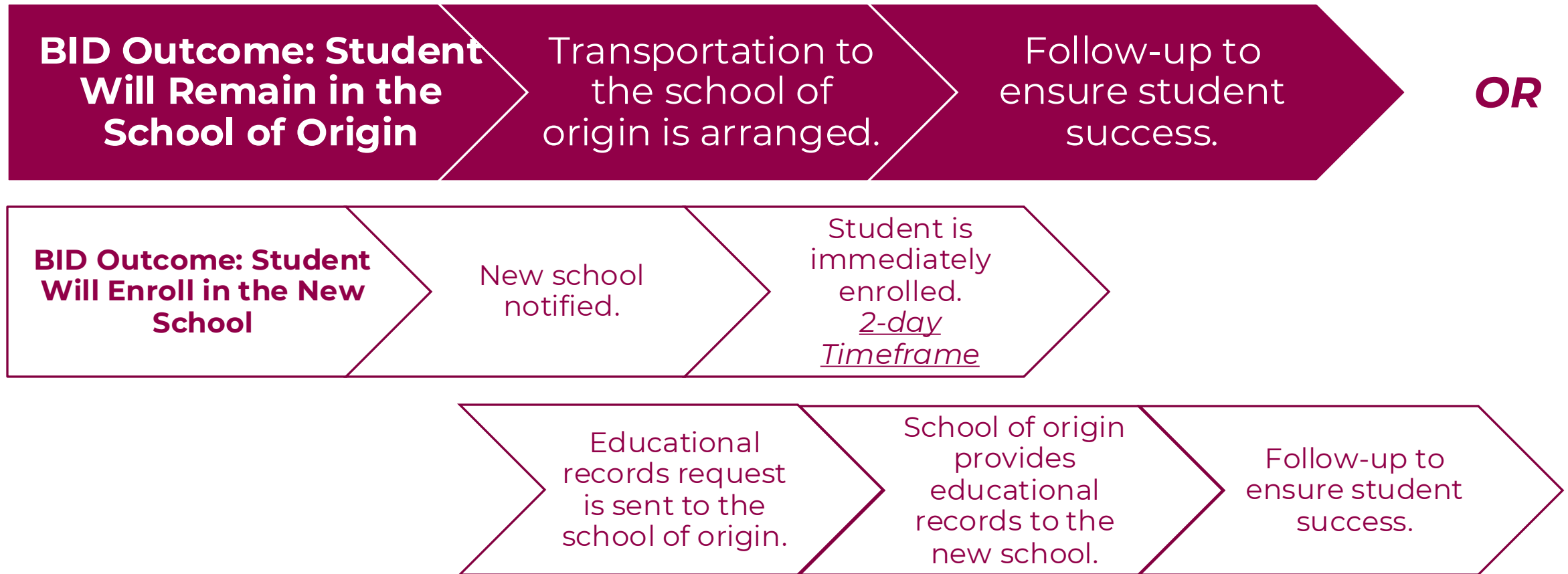
Understanding the Best Interest Determination Process

- If a student has not **entered foster care, experienced a change, or is anticipating a change** in foster care placement, a best interest determination process will **not** be conducted.
- LEAs may **collaborate** with stakeholders and the child welfare agency to assess a student's academic and social wellbeing at any point in their enrollment. However, this collaboration is **not considered a formal BID process**, and is not held to the same federal and state requirements.
- The LEA Foster Care Point of Contact of the **school of origin** must **participate** in the BID process. The LEA Foster Care Point of Contact of the **new school is not a required** participant, and their absence **may not delay** the BID process.
- The BID process shall **not replace** formal IEP or 504 evaluation or review meetings.
- LEAs should **not conduct separate meetings** to make a final determination of what will be in the student's best interest before meeting with the child welfare agency specialist overseeing the BID process.

Best Interest Determination Process Timeline



Best Interest Determination Process Timeline



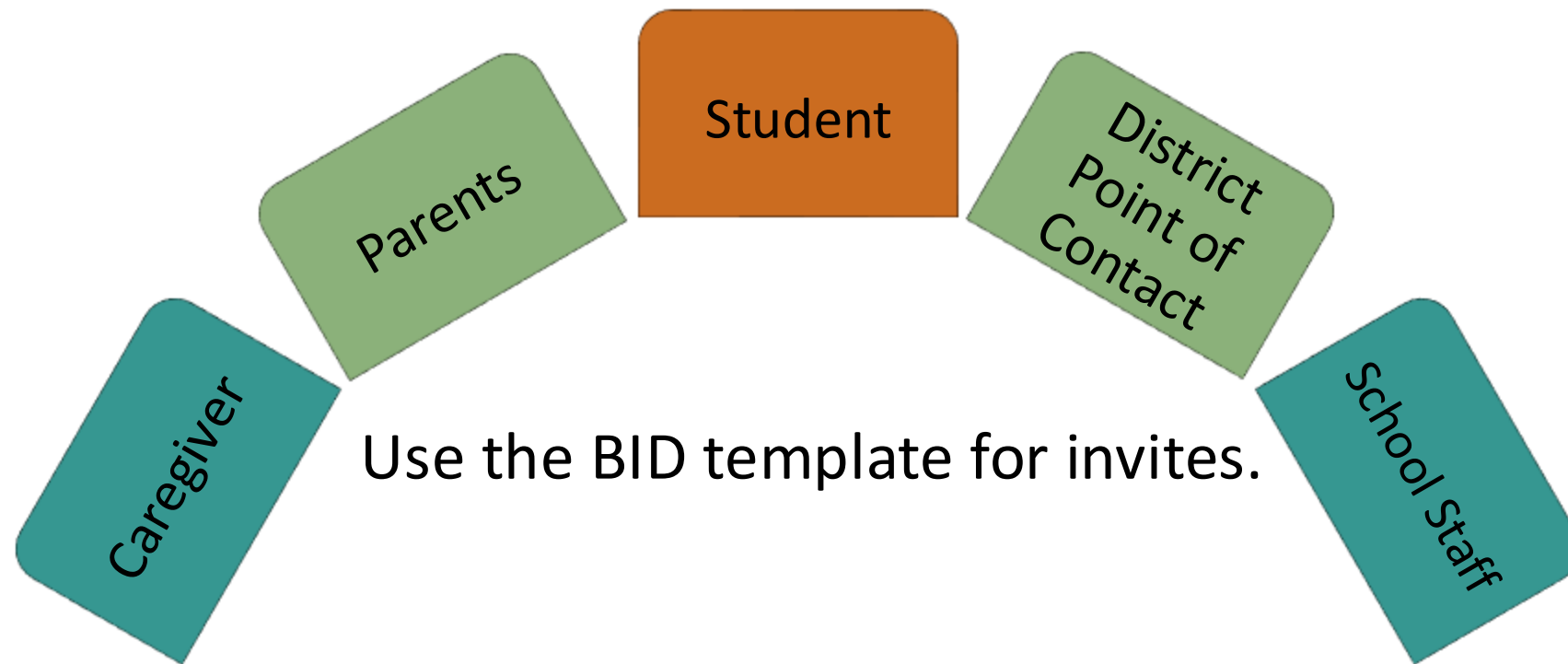
Before a Best Interest Determination Meeting

Requesting a BID Meeting (BID Template)

Student / Parents' Name(s)	Student's Living Situation & Name	Potential Meeting Dates & Time	
Student: Parent(s): IDEA Parent* (if different from Parent):	☐ Kinship Family: ☐ Foster Family: ☐ Group Home: ☐ Other: ☐ Updated Notice to Provider shared with LEA		
Current Enrollment / School & District of Origin	School & District of Residence	IEP/504/IFSP – send to the LEA POC for dissemination to other LEA staff, as needed	School Discipline – send to the LEA POC for dissemination to other LEA staff, as needed
Currently enrolled? ☐ Yes School Name: Grade: District: ☐ No Last Known School: Grade: District:	School Name: School District:	☐ IEP ☐ 504 ☐ IFSP *The IDEA parent may be an appointed Surrogate Parent. To verify, email: Surrogateparents@azed.gov	Suspension: ☐ No ☐ Yes: <i>describe terms (i.e. in-school, out-of-school, short /long-term, alternative school setting, etc., and date eligible to return to regular class)</i> Expulsion: ☐ No ☐ Yes: <i>describe terms of expulsion including any requirements for reconsideration</i>

Safety · Accountability · Change · Family · Engagement · Compassion · Teaming · Advocacy · Equity

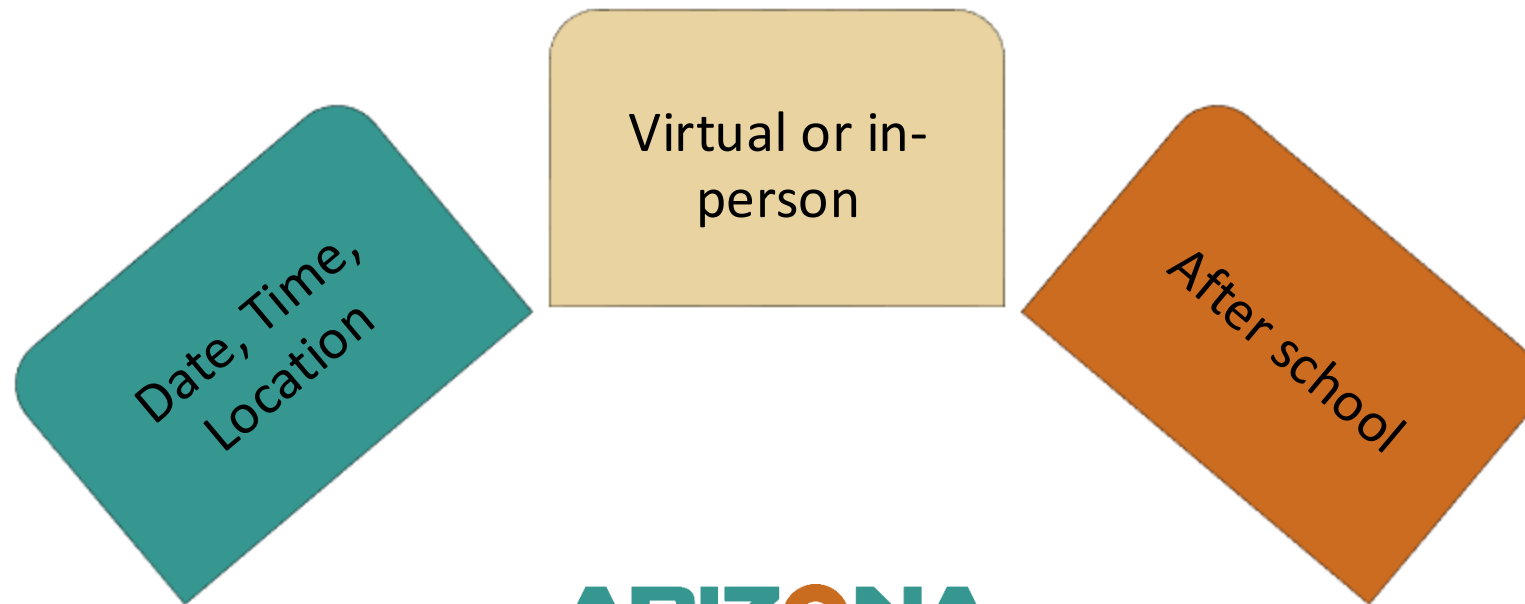
DCS Specialist Responsibility



LEA Foster Care
Point of
Contact List

Safety · Accountability · Change · Family · Engagement · Compassion · Teaming · Advocacy · Equity

DCS Specialist Sends Invitation



DCS Specialist Provides Reminder

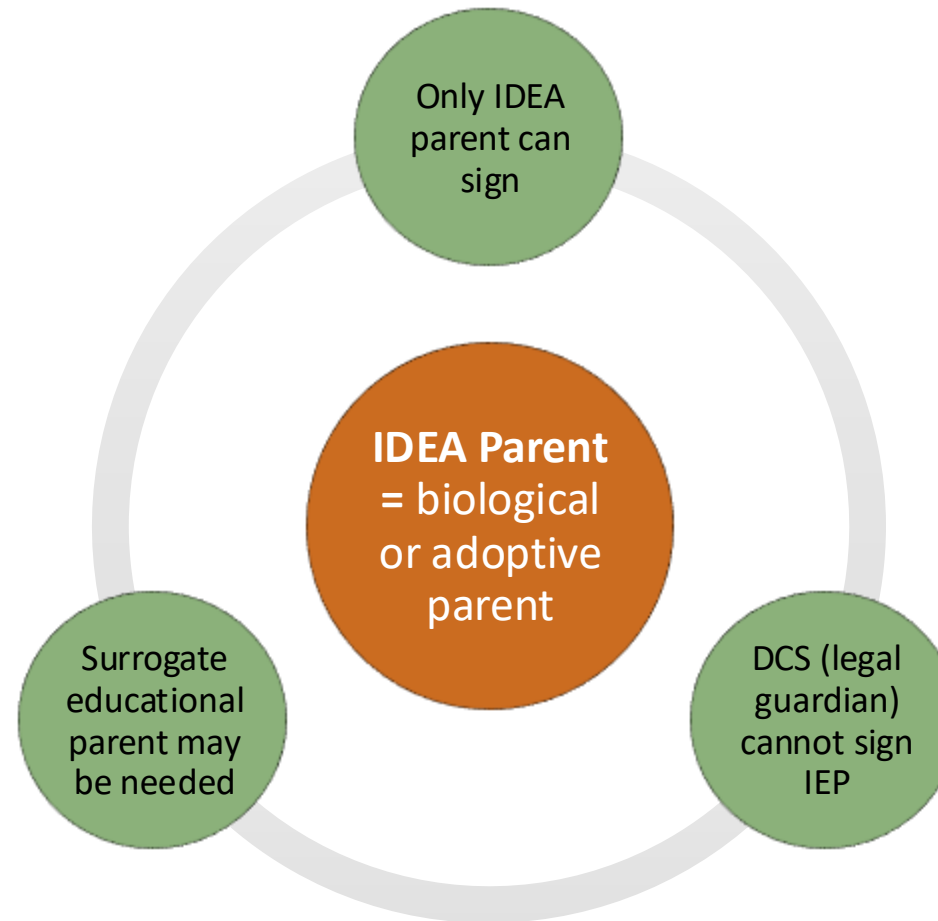
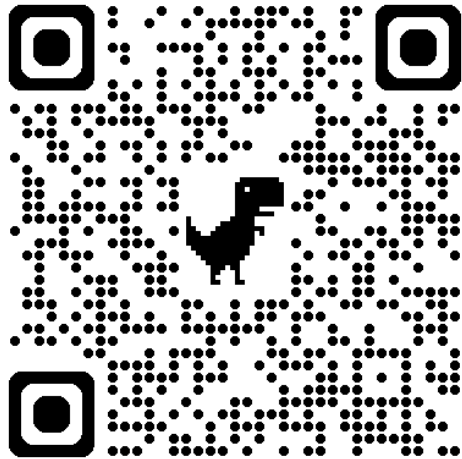
Send a reminder to all participants the day prior to the meeting.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

More Information:

Stefanie Sharkey-

ESSurrogateParents@azed.gov



Safety · Accountability · Change · Family · Engagement · Compassion · Teaming · Advocacy · Equity

Surrogate Parents

Assigning Surrogate Parent	Termination of Surrogate Appointment
• LEA must make reasonable efforts	• Parents become available
• Cannot be DCS, group home, school, or other state agency employee	• Graduation, exits special education
• Contact Tribal Child Welfare Agency for ICWA matters	• Turns 18 or leaves Arizona
	• Requested by LEA

Before a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities



Foster Care Education

School of Origin Best Interest Determination (BID) Preparation Form

Date: [Click or tap to enter a date.](#)

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Information

LEA Name:

School Site:

LEA Foster Care Point of Contact: Email:

School Address:

Child in Foster Care Information

Child Name:

Date of Birth: State Student ID:

Date of FC Move: Grade:

Residence School Address:

School of Origin Input for BID

- How well connected is the child to the school and/or school staff?
(i.e., how long attending the school, positive relationships with school staff, any sense of belonging or fitting in, etc.)
[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- How is the child performing academically?
(i.e., passing/failing classes, reading/writing/math at grade level, etc.)
[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

LEAs are encouraged to utilize the **School of Origin Best Interest Determination Preparation Form**.

- Designed to support the collection of information for the best interest determination meeting.
- Information collected about the student includes:
 - Academic performance
 - Connection to the school community (adults and other students)
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Special academic services (IEP, 504 Plan, EL, etc.)
 - Graduation plan
 - Attendance and discipline background
- LEAs may modify this resources to meet the unique needs of their students and community.

[Find guidance and resources on the Arizona Foster Care Education Program webpage.](#)

Before a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Student Voice

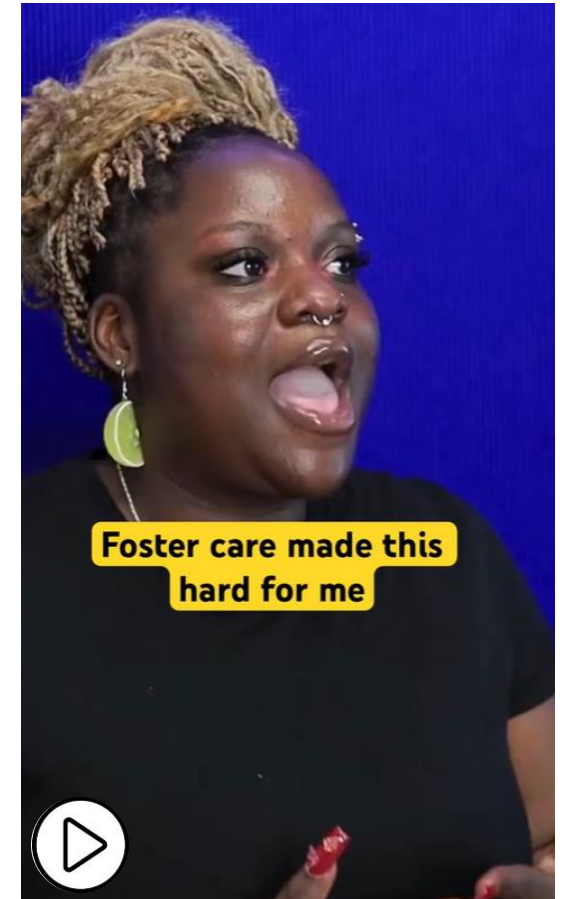
Young people's experiences don't always line up with what federal policies say. That includes **youth rights in foster care.**



Students in foster care can **struggle with advocating** for themselves.

They may need **support** with:

- Understanding systems
- Understanding a process or timeline
- Understanding their rights and options
- Knowing how and when to advocate for themselves to ask for what they need or want
- Feeling confident to advocate for themselves





Share Your Knowledge

How can Local Education Agency Foster Care Points support students in foster care with ensuring they are **aware of their rights** and **are empowered to use their voice** in the BID process?

Type your
answer in
the chat!

“Educational and child welfare agencies are encouraged to **always** involve a student in a BID process, **regardless of the student’s age.**”

[Non-Regulatory Guidance on Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care, 2024](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Best Interest Determination



Before a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Student Voice

- Students of **all ages can participate** in the best interest determination process.
- Ensure **developmentally-appropriate** involvement. Consider:
 - Having a **trusted adult**, such as a teacher or counselor, talk with the student.
 - Have a **conversation** with the student before a BID meeting to learn what the student knows and to describe the **purpose, process, and potential outcomes** of a BID.
 - Make efforts to **gather and document input** from sources and stakeholders that the **student shares** they are connected to, such as a teacher, coach, or school staff.
 - Ensure the student **understands their right** to have their **opinion heard**, and that they have a right to **remain in their school** of origin.
 - Determine **when** and if the student should **join** the meeting, and when they should **leave**. Letting the adults discuss the logistical and technical elements without the student in the room may be more appropriate for some students.
 - **Welcome** the student into the BID meeting by having attendees **introduce** themselves, describe their **role**, and the **purpose** of the meeting.

During a Best Interest Determination Meeting

DCS Policy

[AZ DCS Program Policy Chapter 3, Section 8.4](#) states, The DCS Specialist will complete the Best Interests Determination and Transportation Plan with the child, out-of-home caregiver, the LEA, and the parent/guardian/custodian, if appropriate, to determine if it is in the child's best interests to change schools.

Go Through Guardian BID Form as a Team

- Review the prompt
- Discuss the topic
- Document responses
- Specify disagreements in the narrative boxes
- Make determination

Continued

Best Interests Determination Considerations

- Child safety
- Parents'/caregivers' wishes
- Distance and child's travel time to and from school at time of living arrangement
- Projected duration of out-of-home placement
- The child's academic, developmental, and socialization needs
- The effect a school change will have on the child's learning
- Potential loss of credits for high school students transferring in the middle of a term/semester
- Feasibility of transportation

During a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities

*“A BID process should be **student-centered and context-specific**...the **LEA POC** and the local **child welfare agency POC** should be involved in **all** BID meetings...(and) are encouraged to include **other education and child welfare practitioners** who have **specific or specialized knowledge** about the student in the BID process.”, [ED and HHS Joint Non-Regulatory Guidance, 2024](#)*

- **Required!** Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact of the school of origin
- Teachers and school leaders
- Coaches and mentors
- Counselors or other school-based mental health professionals such as school social workers or school psychologists
- English Learner staff members, if relevant
- Special education staff members and providers, if relevant
- LEA representatives from IEP/504 and placement team, if applicable
- School of origin representatives with knowledge about the student
- Education attorney

“To ensure educational stability, a student in foster care must **remain** in their **school of origin** until the LEA, in collaboration with the child welfare agency, **completes** the BID process and determines that it is in the student’s best interest to attend a different school.”

[Non-Regulatory Guidance on Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care, 2024](#)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Best Interest Determination



During a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities

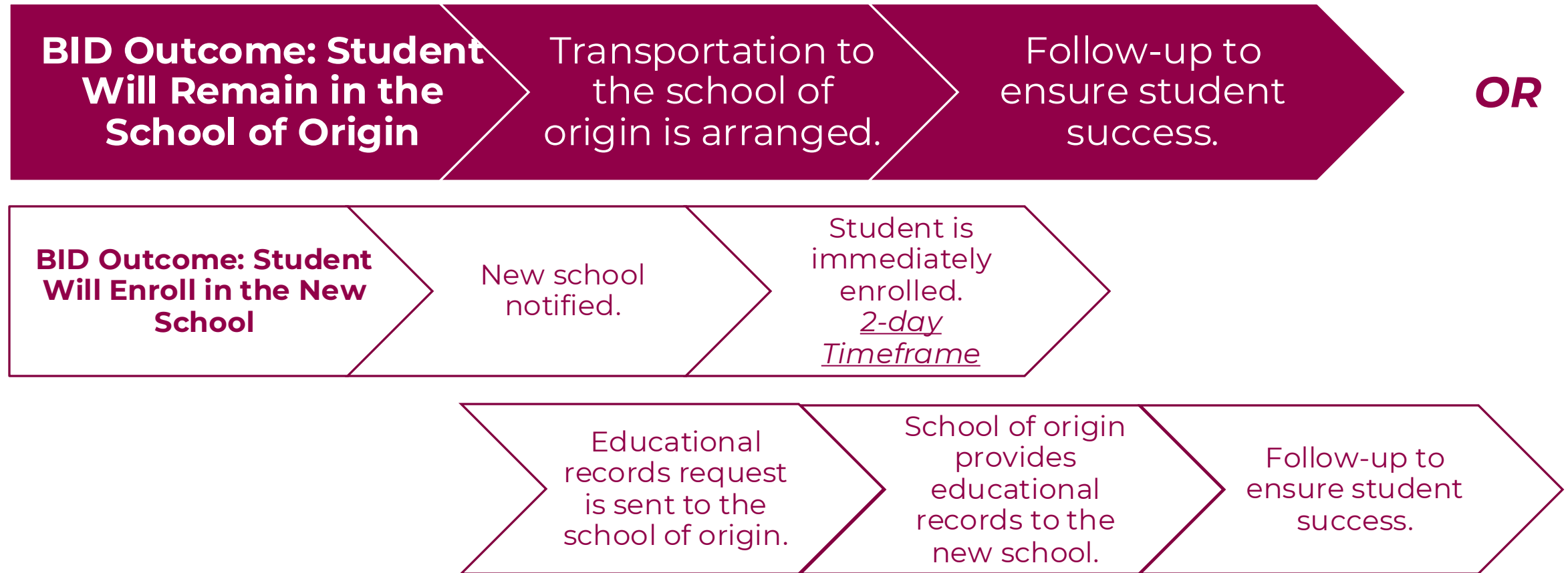
Students in foster care must **remain enrolled** in their school of origin **during** the best interest determination process. This must include efforts to ensure their **full participation** in academic services.

- **Transportation** to the school of origin may need to be arranged **immediately** and **throughout the duration** of the best interest determination process.
- **Alternative methods** of academic engagement, such as online lessons, may be utilized to ensure **active engagement** through the duration of the best interest determination.

All efforts must work towards the intended goal of **ESEA protections** for **educational stability** for students in foster care.

After a Best Interest Determination Meeting

Best Interest Determination Process Timeline



Enrollment and Transportation

If the student is changing schools the student must be enrolled within two business days.

- Specialist completes Transportation Plan
 - Only if school of origin is maintained
- Verifies accuracy
- Signs

After the BID

DCS will send the completed form to appropriate team members, including the local educational agency and caregiver.

Reunification with a Parent/Caregiver

- Provide an update to the school the child is enrolled in
 - Transition plan
 - Reunified with parent
- When child is in physical custody of parent
 - Provide a physical custody letter to the school and/or
 - send a verification email
- Clarify legal custody status with the school

After a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Maintain Enrollment

**BID Outcome: Student
Will Remain in the
School of Origin**

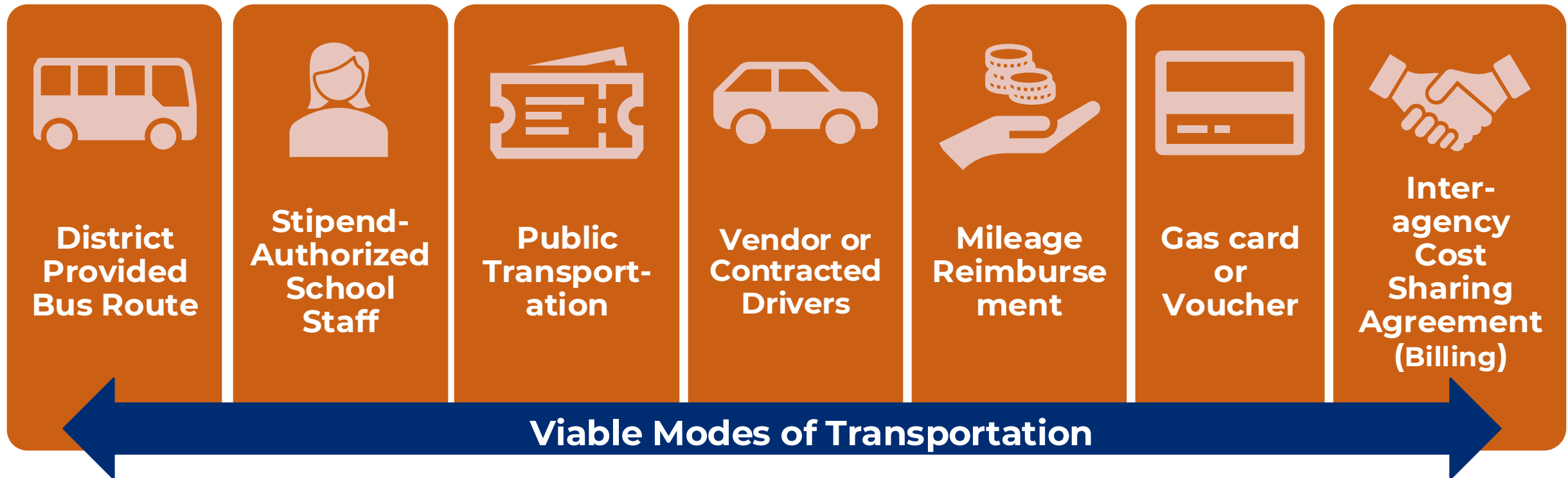
Transportation to
the school of
origin is arranged.

Follow-up to
ensure student
success.

- LEA Foster Care Points of Contact should be **prepared** to discuss **how** transportation is established at the end of a BID meeting, including an understanding of the available options, steps, and individuals responsible for establishing transportation.
- Utilize **written transportation procedures** to ensure timely, cost-effective transportation is established for the duration of the student's experience in foster care.

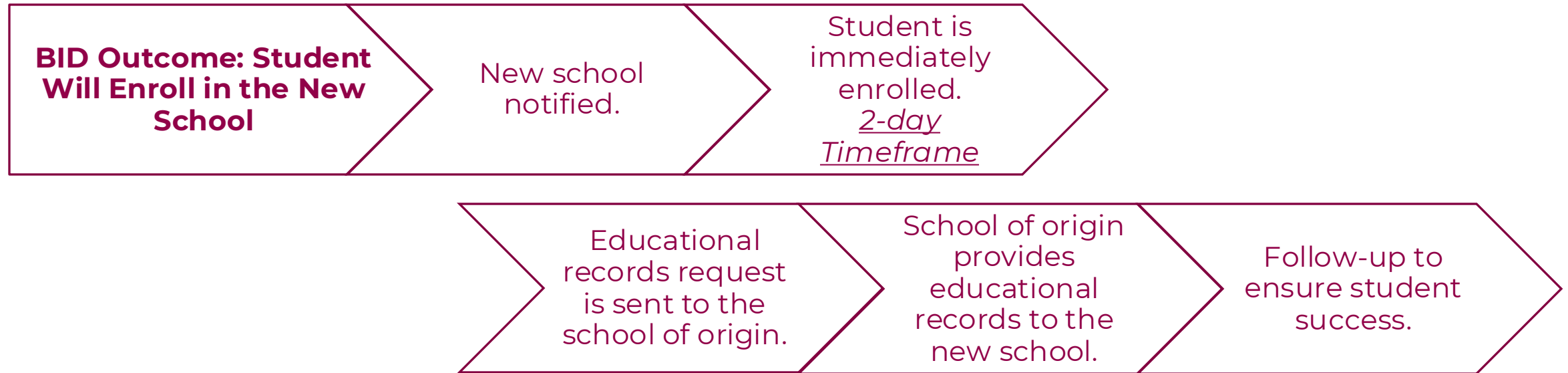
Mode of Transportation

The **mode of transportation** utilized should be **student-centered decision** with consideration given to the safety, viability, cost-efficiency, and logical option.



After a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Immediately Enroll in New School



- Utilize **written procedures** to support timely collaboration with the new school to ensure **immediate enrollment** and **records transfer** occurs within the required timeline.

After a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Immediately Enroll in New School

*“A student is **not fully enrolled** if a student is **not attending school** or **fully participating** in classes, extracurricular activities, and out-of-school and summer opportunities.”, [ED and HHS Joint Non-Regulatory Guidance, 2024](#)*

When a BID process indicates that it is **not in a student’s best interest to remain** at their school of origin, LEAs must ensure that a student in foster care is **immediately enrolled** in their new school **even if** the student does not have the **documentation** typically required for enrollment and should request them from the school of origin, such as:

- Immunization records;
- Class enrollment history, including any advanced or remedial courses;
- Attendance records; and
- An IEP or 504 plan, if applicable.

In general, enrolling students in foster care may provide a **Notice to Provider** (NTP) or **Voluntary Agreement** however, absence of a document establishing residency shall **not delay enrollment**.

“**Each** school district governing board and charter school governing body shall develop and adopt **policies** concerning **transfer credits** for foster children who transfer to the school district or charter school pursuant to a best interest educational placement determination while the foster child is enrolled in any of grades **nine through twelve.**”

[\(A.R.S. § 15-701.04\(B\)\)](#)

Arizona Revised Statute

Transfer Credits



After a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Follow-Up for Success

Arizona Revised Statute describes requirements for LEAs to establish **policies ensuring** the following for students in 9th-12th grade enrolling in a new school following a BID process:

- **Calculate full** and **partial** academic credits earned by the student;
- **Accept** all academic **credits**, including partial credits, earned by the student;
- Make every possible attempt to **accept** completed work as **core credits**, with the option of accepting completed work as elective credit;
- **Meet** with the foster child not later than **ten days** after receiving the foster child's educational records to review and update the foster child's **graduation plan**;
- Provide a **written copy of the graduation plan** to the foster child, each parent of the foster child whose parental rights have not been terminated and the foster child's guardian, custodian, caregiver or foster parent;
- Administer a **local competency assessment** to award full or partial academic **credits**; and
- May **not require** a transferring student in foster care in 11th or 12th grade to satisfy **requirements to graduate higher** than the minimum course of study set by the state board of education.

After a Best Interest Determination Meeting

LEA Responsibilities – Follow-Up for Success

Once students in foster care are enrolled, **follow-up supports** must be provided to ensure their overall success. LEA Foster Care Points of Contact should maintain **awareness** of the following for students in foster care, and **address barriers** when they arise:

- Access to tools and resources
- School attendance
- Disciplinary action
- Progress towards academic goals, such as graduation
- Post-secondary planning
- Participation and sense of belonging in the school community

LEAs may **collaborate** with stakeholders and the child welfare agency to assess a student's academic and social wellbeing at any point in their enrollment. However, this collaboration is **not considered a formal BID process**, and is not held to the same federal and state requirements.

Arizona Department of Child Safety

Policy Chapter 3, Section 8.4

Student Success Meeting - When a change in the school placement (unrelated to a change in the living arrangement) is requested, the DCS Specialist shall discuss the reason for the request with the child, the caregiver, the LEA, and the parent, guardian, and/or custodian, if appropriate, to determine if it is in the child's best interest to change schools.



Action Today's Learning

What **actions** will you take in the **next 30 days** to ensure **educational stability and success** for students in foster care in your local education agency?

Type your
answer in
the chat!

Arizona Department of Child Safety Educational System of Support

FOSTER CARE & KINSHIP CARE

ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF
CHILD SAFETY

Education Contacts

DCS Education Point of Contact

The Education Point of Contact mailbox, educationpoc@azdcs.gov, is available to respond to educational questions of DCS Specialists, caregivers, youth, contractors and community partners to support the educational needs and stability for children and youth in foster care.

Statewide Coordinator Foster Care Education Partnerships

Beverlee Kroll
beverlee.kroll@azdcs.gov

DCS Regional Points of Contact

The DCS Regional ESSA Points of Contact can assist DCS Specialists and Supervisors to coordinate the Best Interest Determination meeting and development of the Transportation Plan (CSO-1348).

DCS Regional Liaisons

Northwest Region	Caryn Wagner Northwest@azdcs.gov
Maricopa West Region	George Johnson MWEducationLiaison@azdcs.gov
Maricopa East Region	Madeline Carvajal or Taylor Bigelow MaricopaEast@azdcs.gov
South Region	Heiya O'Leary south@azdcs.gov
Northeast Region	Brooke Soltero Northeast@azdcs.gov

DCS Educational Specialists

The DCS Education Specialists focus on improving education outcomes of children who are in foster care in Arizona. Education Specialists can provide educational assistance to children currently and formerly in foster care, as well as caregivers, community providers for a variety of situations such as addressing barriers to education, verifying foster care involvement and eligibility, support coordinating BID discussions, and support exploring educational programs. For general questions and inquiries, email EducationSpecialist@azdcs.gov.

DCS Educational Specialists

South/NE Regional QID and CFC EFC Success Coaches	Danny Dominguez danny.dominguez@azdcs.gov
Maricopa East/ NW Regions/Chana and CCA EFC Success Coaches	Renz Naricio renz.naricio@azdcs.gov
Maricopa West and Youth Villages EFC Success Coaches	Yessica Rivera yessica.rivera@azdcs.gov

Student Education Services

The DCS Student Education Services webpage is a central hub for a range of educational assistance for children and youth—from school stability support to coaching for post-secondary success. There are resources on this webpage such as educational services, DCS policies and fact sheets. Visit <https://dcs.az.gov/Education> for more information.

Foster Youth Education Success Program (FYESP)

The FYESP was established to reduce or remove educational barriers and improve educational outcomes for Arizona's children and youth in foster care. FYESP is dedicated to creating a positive and supportive school experience for students by offering tailored assistance and guidance to help them achieve educational success and advance confidently to the next grade level. Some of the services they provide are (but not limited to): support for emergency education meetings, customized education plans, Special Education support and develop partnerships with other education agencies.

For inquiries or to submit a referral:

Email: FYESP@azdcs.gov
<https://dcs.az.gov/FYESP-form>

Arizona Department of Education Contacts

Arizona Department of Education Foster Care Education Coordinator
The ADE foster care education coordinator manages the local education point of contact listing and is available to assist in identification of district and school personnel who can support the school stability of children in foster care. Provides training to DCS staff, caregivers, district, and school staff on how to implement regulations supporting the Every Student Succeeds Act.

ADE Foster Care Education Coordinator

Josely L. Taylor
fostercare@azed.gov
<https://www.azed.gov/fostercare>

Arizona Department of Education: Exceptional Student Services (ESS)

ESS ensures that public education agencies in Arizona have special education programs, policies, and procedures that comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations, and that eligible children and youth with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). DCS Specialists, parents and caregivers can contact ESS to ask questions about the special education needs of children and youth in foster care. Contact via phone at (602) 542-4013 or via email at ESS@azed.gov.

Surrogate Parents: Surrogate parents may be needed to ensure a child's educational needs can be met when there is no parent involved in a case and the child resides in a group home setting. You can contact ADE to inquire about a surrogate parent being assigned to your student. Contact info: Stefanie Sharkey, ESSSurrogateParents@azed.gov or visit <https://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/surrogate/> for more information.

CSO-2611 (09/25)

LEAs should reach out to EducationPOC@azdcs.gov for specific case support and to establish procedures to collaborate!

DCS Education POC

- Statewide Coordinator Foster Care Education Partnerships

DCS Regional POCs (5 Regions)

- Northwest, Maricopa West, Maricopa East, South, Northeast

DCS Educational Specialists (3 Specialists)

- Each specialist supports multiple regions and categories of children and youth in foster care

[Access the Arizona DCS Education Contacts resource!](#)

Where Can I Learn More?

[Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Education Stability and Success for Students in Foster Care](#)

[Arizona Department of Education: Foster Care Page](#)

[Arizona Revised Statute: 8-530.04](#)

[Arizona DCS Education Services Webpage](#)



Safety · Accountability · Change · Family · Engagement · Compassion · Teaming · Advocacy · Equity



Post-Assessment

Let's Begin!

Post-Assessment

1. In which scenarios are local education agencies and child welfare agencies required to conduct a best interest determination process?
2. True or False? The Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact of the school of origin and of the new school are both required to attend and participate in the best interest determination process.
3. Within how many days of a student entering foster care or experiencing a change of foster care placement must the best interest determination process be finalized?
4. How can local education agencies and child welfare agencies collaborate to ensure the best interest determination is a student-factored and context specific decision?

Post-Assessment

1. In which scenarios are local education agencies and child welfare agencies required to conduct a best interest determination process?
 - a) A student enters foster care**
 - ~~b) A student in foster care is experiencing challenges with academic performance and discipline~~
 - c) A student in foster care will be moving foster care placement in the coming weeks**
 - ~~d) A foster caregiver wants a student in their care to attend the same school their children attend~~
2. True or False? The Local Education Agency Foster Care Point of Contact of the school of origin and of the new school are both required to attend and participate in the best interest determination process.
 - ~~a) True~~
 - b) False!**

Post-Assessment

3. Within how many days of a student entering foster care or experiencing a change of foster care placement must the best interest determination process be finalized?
 - a) ~~3 days~~
 - b) 5 days**
 - c) ~~10 days~~
 - d) ~~No clear time limit, but it should be completed in a timely manner~~

4. How can local education agencies and child welfare agencies collaborate to ensure the best interest determination is a student-factored and context specific decision?
 - a) Invite the perspective of stakeholders with knowledge about the student**
 - b) Include the student in the best interest determination meeting**
 - c) Prepare written procedures regarding the best interest determination process**
 - d) Consider a student's connection to the school community and relationships to peers**
 - e) Consider the feasibility of and student's safety during transportation to the school of origin**
 - f) Consider previously attended schools as an option to attend a school of origin**



Closing & Next Steps

Upcoming Professional Learning Sessions

Visit the [Arizona Foster Care Education Program webpage](#) to register for upcoming professional learning events!

Transportation for Students in Foster Care

This professional learning session provides local education agency (LEA) Foster Care Points of Contact and other LEA personnel with an in-depth analysis of requirements to provide transportation to the school of origin for students in foster care.

- **Date: Thursday, November 19th, 2026**
- **Time: 10:00am – 11:30am**
- **[Register here!](#)**

Feedback Survey & Certificates

Feedback Survey

- Will only populate once you click **“Leave Meeting”**
- Must complete to receive a professional learning certificate of participation

Recording and Presentation Materials

- Shared to all registrants after the session
- Posted on the Arizona Foster Care Education Program webpage

Thank you!



**Arizona Foster Care
Education Program**

FosterCare@azed.gov



Arizona Department of Child Safety

EducationPOC@azdcs.gov



**McKay Smith, Mesa
Public Schools**

masmith2@mpsaz.org