



## Memorandum

To: District, Regional and County Directors

From: Mary Havick, Deputy Division Director of Child Welfare

Date: July 28, 2021

Re: Academic Year 2021-2022: Alternative Public School Attendance Plans for Children and Youth in Foster Care

As a continued result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several public school systems will offer virtual and/or hybrid school options during the upcoming academic year. Division policy requires children in foster care to attend in-person public school and, accordingly, includes a waiver process for children in foster care to participate in alternative learning environments - including virtual learning, traditional homeschool, private school and general education diploma programs.

Enrollment decisions should be made collaboratively as a team between caregiver(s), foster parents, birth parents, external partners (when possible/appropriate) and the Division – with input from the child/youth, as appropriate. This team should consider factors including the student's performance within his or her current learning environment, special needs concerns and accommodations, adaptability to the requested alternative learning environment, the ability to independently obtain needed equipment or services and required caregiver supports. If consensus cannot be reached among the team, the final decision will rest with the Division as the child's legal custodian, with consultation provided by the Regional Director, and with the goal of meeting the child's educational needs while minimizing the risk of a placement disruption.

Whenever a hybrid and/or virtual approach is the only option provided by a school system, it is not considered to be an alternative arrangement. The attached *Non-Traditional Education Approval Form* must be completed and approved before children and youth may participate in an alternative learning arrangement.

Please address any specific education questions to Carmen Callaway [carmen.callaway@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:carmen.callaway@dhs.ga.gov) or Robin Brooks at [robin.brooks@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:robin.brooks@dhs.ga.gov).