Organizational Self-Study on Educational Stability

This self-study assessment tool can be used to review educational provisions related to Fostering Connections and overall policies and practices that support educational stability and continuity for children in foster care. The tool is designed to review overall administrative policies, identify strengths and challenges in ensuring educational stability for children and youth.

ADMINISTRATIVE: LEGAL MANDATES/POLICY/PRACTICES

Policies

Does your agency have written policies that promote educational stability and continuity in the following areas? Check all that apply.

___ Maintaining child's education record in the case file.

____Considering proximity and appropriateness of educational setting when making living placement determinations.

____Making determinations about whether it is in the best interest of the child to remain in the same school at the time of placement in foster care.

___ Maintaining children in their current schools at the time of initial placement into foster care

___ Keeping children in their same schools when they must change foster care placements

___ Immediately enrolling children in new schools when they must change schools

Ensuring complete school record is transferred when child changes schools.

___ The inclusion of education plans in youth's case plan and transition plans

___ The inclusion of youth in decisions regarding school changes

___ Monitoring enrollment and ongoing attendance in school.

For all written policies, please provide the web links for review:
_____
_____

If agency has written policies in these areas, in what ways has staff been informed of these policies and/or practices?
_____
_____

Education Stability and Continuity Practices

Are the child's educational needs addressed as part of the initial assessment at the time of placement? __Yes __No

How are educational needs documented and addressed in the case planning process?

_____
_____

How often is the educational plan updated?

_____
_____

How does the agency decide on the appropriateness of the child's current education setting?

_____
_____

How does the agency make a best interest determination about school placement, when living placements change?

_____
_____

Do you seek input from any of the following people or review educational records. Please check all that apply.

_____ The child/youth
_____ The parent
_____ The child's current caregiver
_____ The child's teacher
_____ Another school representative who has regular contact with the youth (identify _____)
_____ The child's tribe (tribal social worker), if this is an ICWA case
_____ Child's attorney, GAL and/or CASA
_____ Other: _____
___ Reviews the child's educational records (which records? _____)
___ Other: _____

Does the assessment take into account any special education needs?

_____ Yes ___ No

Does the assessment take into account the youth's extra curricular activities?
___Yes ___No

Does the agency have placement practices designed to place children in their same school:

At time of initial placement?   ___ Yes ___ No
When children must change foster care placements?   ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, what placement practices do you use?

_____

_____

Rate you current level of success in keeping children in their same school:

	4=Very successful	3= Moderately successful	2=Somewhat successful	1= Not very successful
When they first enter foster care				
Subsequent living placement changes while in care				

When children are placed outside their school boundaries, does you agency work to keep children in their original schools?   ____ Yes ___ No

If yes, how do you do this? _____

_____

When deciding whether remaining in the child's current school is not in his/her best interest:

Do you consult with: (please check all that apply)

____ The child/youth
____ The parent
____ The child's current caregiver
____ The child's teacher
____ Another school representative (identify _____)
____ The child's attorney, GAL and/or CASA
____ Other: _____

Do you consider: (please check all that apply)

___ The preference of the child

___ The preference of the parent and/or educational decision maker
___ The child's ties to their current school, including involvement in extracurriculars or connections with peers and adults
___ The child's current educational program is not meeting their educational needs and interests
___ The distance of and travel time associated with the commute will not have a positive impact the child's education
___ The personal safety of the child
____Whether another school can better serve the child's unique educational needs and interests, including special education needs
____ Other _____

Does your agency give notice to all relevant individuals (child, parent, judge, school) about any decision regarding enrolling a child in a new school? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, how is notice given?
_____
_____

Does your agency have a process for resolving differences of opinion regarding the child's best interest with respect to the school he/she should attend?   ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, how are disputes resolved? _____
_____

When it is determined that it is not in a child's best interests to remain in his/her original school, how often do the following occur?

4=Always
3=Often
2=Sometimes
1=Rarely

	4	3	2	1
The child is immediately enrolled in a new school without waiting on transfer of paperwork.				
The child's records are readily transferred t the new school.				
The child immediately begins attending school.				
The child immediately begins participating in school activities.				
If needed, immediate transportation is				

arranged for the child				

What are your biggest challenges related to keeping children in the same schools when in their best interest?

____ Lack of placement resources near school
____ Transportation costs
____ Lack of transportation providers
____ Lack of public transportation
____ Long distances between placements and school
____ School residency or other requirements prevent enrollment
____ School resistance to enrolling student
____ Lack of records or guardianship form
____ Other _____

For children in foster care, who is the child's education decision maker in your state?
Who can have the authority to make education decisions for children in care (check all that apply)
___ The parent(s)
___ The child welfare agency (for general education decisions only)
___ The foster parent/caregiver
___ The court appoints a decision maker
___ Other: _____
___ Not certain

Does your agency have a process for determining how education decision makers are identified?   ___Yes ___No
Describe_____

Does the agency inform the youth, the school, and other interest parties about who has the authority to make educational decisions?
___Yes ___No

Does the agency have a process for ensuring that:

All young children receiving Title IV-E foster care have access to early intervention/early childhood education services?   ___Yes ___No

Is yes, what is your process?

_____

All children receiving Title IV-E foster care are enrolled in school full time or have already completed high school   ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, what is your process?

_____

All children receiving Title IV-E adoption assistance are
enrolled in school full time or have already completed
high school   ___ Yes   ___ No

If yes, what is your process?

_____

How does the agency track any educational moves throughout the child's stay in
the foster care system?
_____
_____

Transitioning Youth

How does the agency educate youth on available educational options?
_____
_____

How are young people involved in decision making and planning involving their
educational needs?
_____
_____

Does your agency include a plan for secondary and post-secondary education in
each transition plan for youth in foster care?   ___ Yes ___ No

How would you rate the quality of secondary and post secondary education plans
for youth who are transitioning from foster care?

4=Consistently excellent	3= Of moderate quality	2=Of poor quality	1=Need considerable improvement

Does the agency include holiday and summer housing arrangements as part of
the post secondary educational planning process? ___Yes ___No

How are young people supported as they begin their post-secondary goals?

_____
_____

Does the agency offer mentoring or other emotional supports for the post secondary student? ___Yes ___No

COLLABORATION

STATE OR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY

Does the agency (at the state level) collaborate with the state education agency to ensure education stability and continuity for children and youth in foster care?
                                    ____ Yes ____ No
If yes, how? _____

Des the agency (at the local level) collaborate with local education agencies to ensure educational stability and continuity for children and youth in foster care?
                                    ___ Yes ____ No
If yes, how? _____

Does the agency work with community resources to ensure that students who do change schools are provided with tutoring or other supports to catch up with their peers?
                                    ___Yes   ___No

Does your collaborative effort with education agencies include any of the following? Please check all that apply.

___ Interagency taskforce, workgroup, or committee
___ A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or interagency agreement or other document institutionalizing the collaboration
___School-based child welfare staff, including special Indian Education staff, such as Johnson O'Malley program staff
___ Designated child welfare staff to work with schools on the educational needs of children and youth in foster care
___ Designated school staff to work with the child welfare agency on the education needs of children and youth in foster care.
___Interdisciplinary training with child welfare and education
___Sharing educational data
___ Other: _____

How do you rate your level of collaboration with education agencies?

4=Excellent	3=Good	2= In the beginning stages	1=Not developed

<u>What challenges do you face around collaboration with schools, districts and education agencies?</u>

_____

JUVENILE COURT

Does the agency include educational information in its reports to the courts?

4=Always	3= Most of the time	2=Occasionally	1=Rarely

Do the juvenile courts use model orders or protocols that facilitate the court's review and orders regarding the educational needs of children and youth in foster care?

    __ Yes
    __ No
    __ Not certain

Do the juvenile courts address the educational needs of children and youth in foster care in each hearing?

4=Always	3= Sometimes	2=Rarely	1=Never

Do the juvenile courts typically ask about:

The child's enrollment in school	___ Yes	___ No
The child's transportation to school	___ Yes	___ No
The child's attendance in school	___ Yes	___ No
The child academic performance	___ Yes	___ No
Any changes in school placements	___ Yes	___ No
Any special education issues	___ Yes	___ No
The youth's post-secondary education goals	___ Yes	___ No

Do the juvenile courts ask children/youth about their educational needs and experiences?

4=Always	3= Sometimes	2=Rarely	1=Never

How do you rate your level of collaboration with the juvenile courts on educational issues?

4=Excellent	3=Good	2= In the	1=Not developed

		beginning stages	

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

What funding is used to pay for transportation of children to their original schools when they are placed outside their original school boundaries? Please check all that apply.

___ Title IV-E foster care maintenance
___ Title IV-E administration
___ Other child welfare funding
___ Education funding (state or local district? _____
___ Other:_____

How are children and youth in foster care transported to their schools of origin? Please check all that apply.

___ School bus
___ Public transportation (public bus, other public transport)
___ Foster parent or caretaker vehicle
___Privately contracted transportation services (vans, cars, taxis)
___ Other: _____

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Does the agency collect educational information on each child/youth at time of placement in foster care? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, what types of information are collected? _____
_____

Does the agency track educational data on each child/youth beginning at the time of placement in foster care and continuing throughout the child's/youth's stay in foster care? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, do the data include: (please check all that apply)

_____ Any changes in school placement
_____ Full time attendance in school
_____ Grade advancement/retention
_____ Need for special education services
_____ High school graduation

If data is not collected through the state agency, do you have localities that that collect and share data? ___Yes __No

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What type of professional development activities are used to build staff's knowledge, skills and abilities in meeting the education needs of children and youth in foster care? Check all that apply:

__   Classroom Training
__   Online training
__   Teleconferences
__   Webcasts
__   Clinical Consultation
__   Coaching
__   Mentoring
__   Other (please specify)_____

Is there a specific training on educational stability and continuity practices? __Yes __No

If yes, what knowledge, skills and abilities does this training address?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Which of the following staff receive educational stability and continuity training?

	YES	NO
Foster care staff	___	___
Kinship staff	___	___
Adoption staff	___	___
Mental health staff	___	___
Supervisors	___	___
Administrators	___	___
Legal staff	___	___
CASA	___	___
Foster Family Agency staff	___	___

How is your professional development program administered? Check all that apply
     ___   Internal staff development trainers
     ___   External trainers (university partners, community)

OTHER AGENCY INITIATIVES

What other initiatives do you have that are relevant to educational stability and continuity practices?

_____
_____
_____
_____

AGENCY STRENGTHS

Based on the above self assessment, what do you see as your agency's strengths in promoting educational stability and continuity for children and youth in care? Check all that apply.

STRENGTHS

___ Placement practices that keep children in their original school districts
___ Practices that facilitate education decision making for children/youth in foster care
___ Practices that ensure full time attendance in school
___ Collaboration with education agencies
___ Provision of school transportation
___ Collaboration with juvenile courts
___ Collaboration with youth
___ Training for staff on educational policies and practices
___ Other (please specify)_____

AGENCY CHALLENGES

Which of the following are challenges that your agency faces in achieving education stability and continuity for children and youth in foster care? Check all that apply

___ Placement practices that keep children in their original schools
___ Practices that facilitate education decision making for children/youth in foster care
___ Practices that ensure full time attendance in school

___ School transportation
___ Collaboration with education agencies
___ Collaboration with juvenile courts
___ Collaboration with youth
___ Other (please specify)_____

What do you need to overcome these challenges?
_____
_____
_____

What resources are currently available to help you to overcome these challenges?
_____
_____
_____

Technical Assistance and Training Needs

Based on this assessment, how can the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections be of assistance: Check all that apply

___ Policy review
___ Policy development
___ Best practices in achieving education stability and continuity
___ Best practices in ensuring the full time school attendance of children/youth in foster care
___ Implementation of policy and practices
___ Data analysis
___ Curriculum design strategies
__ Caseworker training
___ Supervisory Training
___ Other _____

Sources: Adapted from CPYP Agency Self-Assessment Tool on Youth Permanency.

Checklist 1: Setting the Stage (2009) Legal Center For Foster Care and Education. American Bar Association & Casey Family Programs

Checklist 2: Education Obligations and Considerations Under the Fostering Connections Act. (2009) Legal Center For Foster Care and Education. American Bar Association & Casey Family Programs