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 your current level of success in keeping children in their same school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4=Very successful</th>
<th>3= Moderately successful</th>
<th>2=Somewhat successful</th>
<th>1= Not very successful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When they first enter foster care</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subsequent living placement changes while in care</td>
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</table>

When children are placed outside their school boundaries, does your 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child is immediately enrolled in a new school without waiting on transfer of paperwork.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child’s records are readily transferred to the new school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child immediately begins attending school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The child immediately begins participating in school activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If needed, immediate transportation is</td>
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</table>
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4=Consistently excellent</th>
<th>3= Of moderate quality</th>
<th>2=Of poor quality</th>
<th>1=Need considerable improvement</th>
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</table>

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4=Excellent</th>
<th>3=Good</th>
<th>2= In the beginning stages</th>
<th>1=Not developed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What challenges do you face around collaboration with schools, districts and education agencies?
**JUVENILE COURT**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4=Always</th>
<th>3= Most of the time</th>
<th>2= Occasionally</th>
<th>1= Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4=Always</th>
<th>3= Sometimes</th>
<th>2= Rarely</th>
<th>1= Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4=Always</th>
<th>3= Sometimes</th>
<th>2= Rarely</th>
<th>1= Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4= Excellent</th>
<th>3= Good</th>
<th>2= In the</th>
<th>1= Not developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster care staff</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship staff</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption staff</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health staff</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal staff</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASA</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Family Agency staff</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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