

FOSTERING SCHOOL SUCCESS MANUAL

Brevard Public Schools

Brevard Family Partnership

Department of Children and Families, District 5

September 2013

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I. Purpose

All children have the right to an education. However, children known to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) often struggle due to various factors such as the effects of abuse and neglect, removal from their families, lack of focus on an education, and inadequate support systems. Due to the multitude of issues that can complicate progression in school, it is imperative that the personnel responsible for the education of these children work collaboratively to initiate and maintain procedures to foster student success.

A formal interagency agreement between Brevard Public Schools, Brevard Family Partnership (BFP), and Department of Children and Families (DCF) sets forth guidelines designed to promote stability within the educational setting and educational progress including post-secondary education and employability skills. The intent of this manual is to provide specific procedures and information which create an awareness of these students' unique educational needs and provide supportive educational interventions. Our goal is to provide students with the best opportunity for school success. Working closely with the care manager and the foster parent or guardian shall increase the likelihood of these students becoming academically successful.

II. Highlights of Agreement

Florida Statutes 3900.16(4) requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enter into an agreement with school districts regarding children known to them who are of school age or children known to be younger than school age but who would otherwise qualify for services from the school district. Students for whom the interagency agreement is intended are students who have been removed from their parent or primary caregivers; are under the custody of the court and have been placed by Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) in a licensed shelter, foster home or group home, or licensed residential facility. The agreement addresses: sharing of information between the agencies, parental rights, need for surrogate parent, enrollment in school, transportation, Exceptional Student Education, training, and conflict resolution.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

a. Foster Care Designee

The role of the foster care designee is to support the academic achievement and social/emotional needs of students who have been placed in foster care. The responsibilities in achieving this goal include:

- Serves as the single point of contact at every public/charter school;
- Serves as a resource to the school principal and other personnel to facilitate the provision of supportive services;
- Facilitates registration process for in-coming/transitioning foster students;
- Identifies foster care students to teachers and school personnel with a need to know;
- Coordinates activities with other school based personnel with a need to know (i.e. ESE Specialist, Social Worker, Foster Care District Liaison/Guidance Counselor);
- Reports to Foster Parents, Foster Care Guidance Counselor, Care Managers and Therapeutic Counselor significant changes or concerns regarding adverse changes in grades, attendance, and behavior;
- Maintains a confidential folder for the school containing information pertinent to a student's foster care status;
- Communicates with designees at other schools to facilitate the transition of students entering your school or transferring to another school;
- Develops a working relationship with Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) staff, and their provider agencies responsible for placement and foster care casework services;
- Becomes familiar with Florida's dependency law (Florida Statute Chapter 39);
- Invites Foster Care Parent, Foster Care Guidance Counselor, and Care Manager to IEP/504 meetings, IPST meetings, and Administrative Hearings;
- Participates in relevant school meetings regarding foster children.

Each principal shall identify a professional staff as a Foster Care Designee. The Foster Care Designee shall have primary responsibility for coordinating/monitoring the support and educational interventions for the foster care student and to communicate with Foster Parents/ Residential Facility Designee, Care Manager, and Foster Care Guidance Counselor. The Foster Care Designee will ensure that the procedures identified on the Foster Care Designee's Checklist (See Appendix A) are completed in a timely manner.

b. Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) Family Care Manager

These staff members work with children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned. The role of the Care Manager is to support children and families and to work toward their safety, well-being, and child permanency. Duties include:

- Family assessment
- Case planning
- Concurrent planning
- Family engagement

- Assisting with community referrals
- On-going in-home visits of children
- Visits with children at school
- On-going safety assessments
- Judicial reports and court attendance
- Supporting independent living initiative
- Serving as a change agent
- Documenting service delivery through maintaining the case file
- Attending IEP meetings and updating parents
- Notifying parents of IEP meetings or Change of Placements
- Accessing student Edline Account and reporting educational data to court

c. Role of Foster Care/Natural Parents

Unless prohibited by court order, natural parents should participate in their child's educational planning, including the determination of special education needs. Parents should be encouraged to maintain their role in these processes, unless parental rights have been legally terminated. The Code of Federal Regulation 34CFR 300.13 prohibits Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) or any other agency employee vested in the care of the child to sign in lieu of the parent for ESE (Exceptional Student Education) purposes. This includes signature for evaluation through the school system.

Foster care parents are extended the same rights as other parents. They should be encouraged to participate in conferences with the student's teachers and receive information and provide input about grading, attendance, behavior, ESE services, Section 504 rights, etc. Foster care parent should notify the school of removal from their home.

d. Role of Guardian ad Litem

The role of the Guardian ad Litem is to advocate for the best interests of children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned. These individuals help children navigate through the court system and make sure they receive appropriate social services. The Guardian ad Litem is invited to Individual Problem Solving Team (IPST) and IEP meetings. The Guardian ad Litem must produce the court order appointing them.

e. Role of DCF Protective Investigator

The role of the DCF Protective Investigator is to investigate abuse, neglect and abandonment cases as assigned through the DCF Abuse Hotline. The investigator shall follow Brevard Public Schools procedure for entering school campuses and interviewing students.

f. Role of Brevard Public Schools District Liaison

The role of the School District Liaison/Foster Care Guidance Counselor is to serve as a liaison between Brevard County Schools and Brevard Family Partnership and their provider agencies to increase educational outcomes for students in Foster Care. The responsibilities in achieving this goal include:

- Primary contact for concerns related to foster care students age 13-18
- Receives updated care manager lists
- Maintains a lists of students in foster care with their school of attendance
- Distributes (Office of Students at Risk) the list of students in Foster Care to their respective school of attendance
- Updates (Office of Students at Risk) the Foster Care Designee list
- Reviews school records for students in foster care
- Collaborates with guidance counselors, ESE Specialist, teachers, and administrators
- Provides support to foster parents, caregivers, and case management personnel
- Reviews education plans for students in foster care over 13 years of age
- Consults with students in regard to credit retrieval and educational options
- Assists students in registering for college and obtaining financial aid
- Requests funding for educational expenses
- Attends IPST Meetings, IEP/504 Meetings, Manifestation Meetings/Administrative Hearings
- Participates in Case Management and Independent Living Staffings
- Assists with transportation request
- Updates the Foster Care Manual and distributes information to the schools

g. Role of BFP Program Manager

- Provides monthly foster care list to liaison
- Serves as point of contact with District Liaison
- Facilitates special needs committee for funding requests

h. Role of Care Giver Liaison

- Support for foster parents and caregiver
- Communication with District Liaison

i. Role of School Principal

The Principal shall assign a Foster Care Designee that has been trained in the foster care requirements, facilitate Edline Access to Dependency Care Managers, and appoint the appropriate staff to document Foster Care students in AS400 (See Appendix B).

IV. Attendance

Children who have attained the age of 5 on or before September 1st of the school year are eligible for admission to kindergarten during that school year. All children who have attained the age of 6 or who will have attained the age of 6 by February 1st of any school year, but who have not reached the age of 16 are required to attend school regularly. A child who is 16-18 years of age may only withdraw from school with parent/legal guardian consent.

V. Rilya Wilson Act F.S. 39.604

The Rilya Wilson Act requires coordination between department staff and Brevard Family Partnership staff with Early Learning Coalitions and licensed early education or child care providers. It provides priority for child care services for specified children who are at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment. This includes court ordered protective supervision and licensed care. The Act specifies certain requirements designed to ensure the safety and well being of children age three to school entry who are under court ordered protective supervision or in the custody of the department or a community-based lead agency and enrolled in a licensed early education or child care program. Each child who is subject must participate in licensed early education or child care services at least five days a week, unless exempt by the court. Care Managers must notify the operator of a licensed early education or child care program whenever a child who is subject to this law is enrolled in the program. Information regarding the child's at-risk-status must be provided to the operator of the licensed early education or child care program or to the director of the particular location at the time of the child's enrollment. Children cannot be withdrawn from the program without the prior written approval of the community-based lead agency (BFP). Case Managers must consult with their supervisor prior to granting the approval. Signed documentation noting approval to cease attendance or reduce weekly required number of days for attendance must be presented to the operator of the facility. The early education provider or child care provider must notify Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) of absences by the end of the business day following an unexcused absence or a seventh consecutive excused absence.

VI. Truancy

Schools are expected to follow the same absentee/truancy procedures for foster care students as for all other students. The Foster Care Designee shall contact the Care Manager for all attendance protocols and concerns.

VII. Transportation Requests

For students residing in their boundary schools' zone, busing is provided only to those who live more than 2 miles from the school. Exceptions are made for ESE students (determined in the IEP) and situations where a walking route would involve hazardous traffic conditions, as determined by the school district. Students attending magnet, ESE clusters or centers, teen parent, alternative or disciplinary or other specialized settings are generally eligible for busing through those sites. Busing to the boundary school will be coordinated directly through that school.

If the determination is made to maintain a foster child (child residing in a licensed placement) at their current school, the Foster Care Designee must complete/update a Transportation Request.

- Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) Care Manager will submit the Transportation Request to the school's Foster Care Designee
- Foster Care Designee submits request to the Director of Transportation 633-3681.
- Area Transportation Office contacts Foster Care Designee with approval status
- The District's Liaison is contacted if a problem arises

Out of boundary requests may take up to 10 business days to be processed. The Care Manager is responsible for ensuring temporary transportation for the child until the school district has determined the appropriate transportation option.

Whenever feasible, the first transportation option to be considered will be bus stops which already exist or the addition of new stops on an existing route such as those for magnet programs, ESE clusters, near-by schools, etc.

Homeless Students (McKinney Vento Act)

Homeless students have the option of continuing in their school of origin or enrolling in their local school. Transportation will be provided to the student to continue at their school of origin. Additionally, a temporary waiver is provided for proof of immunizations and other registration documentation.

Locally, McKinney-Vento funds are used to provide tutors at several of the homeless and dependency shelters. Check with the shelter staff or the Homeless Education Department at the school district to find out more information. Contact: Sally Shinn, Ed.D. (321) 633-1000, extension 366.

VIII. School Enrollment

If the student is residing with someone other than the parent or legal guardian, a court order documenting custody or a notarized statement from a parent identifying the person assuming responsibility for the child must also be provided.

Foster care students are required to follow the same procedures for school enrollment as all other Brevard Public Schools students. An exemption for the immediate required enrollment documentation (i.e. immunization history, birth certificate, school records) is granted for students who meet the federal/state definition of “homeless.” Children placed by the state in emergency or transitional shelters awaiting foster home or other permanent placement meet this exemption.

- Any legal guardian or DCF representative, Brevard Family Partnership contracted provider, foster parent, or facility staff can register the child in school

IX. Exemptions from Physical Examination and/or Immunizations

A child may be exempt from the required physical examination and/or immunizations upon written request of the parent or guardian of such child stating objection to the immunizations and/or examinations on religious grounds or for medical reason certified by a competent medical authority.

A School Registration form and the Information for Foster Care Children form must be completed by Brevard Family Partnership and provided to the Foster Care Designee at the respective school for every child in a licensed setting attending a Brevard Public School or charter school. This form, created collaboratively by Brevard Family Partnership and the school system, includes critical demographic and contact information used to update the school district’s databases. The form also addresses specific concerns such as court orders or other stipulations, which may prohibit or limit the contact the child may have with parents or other individuals. Copies of such court orders must be attached to the form each time a form is submitted. A form should be given to the foster care designee at the time of a new registration, anytime information needs to be updated, or immediately after a child has been taken into custody. The registration process should be conducted at the school in private to protect the child’s confidentiality. Anytime changes occur which affect the accuracy of information on the form (i.e. change of address or Case Manager, new orders affecting contact), an updated form must be given to the school’s Foster Care Designee within 72 hours.

X. Free and Reduced Meals

All foster children must have an application completed for free and reduced lunch. A foster child is a child who is living within a household but remains the legal

responsibility of the welfare agency or court, and is considered a household of one. Any income the child receives should be listed, or zero income should be indicated on the application. The amount the foster parent receives for the child's personal use is considered when determining eligibility (not the foster parent's income). If a child changes schools within Brevard County, their free or reduced-price meals shall be transferred and honored by the receiving school.

XI. School Transition

If it has been determined that a change in school placement would be in the student's best interest, the child shall be withdrawn from their present school and registered at their new school by their Foster Parent or Care Manager. The Care Manager or Foster Parent shall complete the registration form and provide it to the Foster Care Designee or Administrator at the child's new school at the time of registration, along with any relevant court orders that prohibit or limit the student's contact with parents of other persons. The registration process should be conducted in private in order to protect the student's confidentiality.

No student in shelter or foster care should be denied entrance to school due to a missing registration form.

The Foster Care Designee at the child's current school shall notify the receiving school Foster Care Designee and facilitate a smooth transition. A copy of the information in the confidential folder should be maintained for tracking/monitoring purposes. The transition should consist of:

- The current school's Foster Care Designee contacting the new school Foster Care Designee directly to discuss pertinent issues and paperwork regarding the child and notify the Foster Care Guidance Counselor/District Liaison;
- Sending the confidential folder to the new school's Foster Care Designee; and
- Registration of the student at their new school, by the Foster Parent or Care Manager, along with the provision of the new School Registration Information

XII. Placement Changes and Educational Stability

The role of Brevard Family Partnership (BFP) is to place a child within their same school attendance zone. BFP shall attempt whenever possible to place students in foster homes/settings within, or closest to, their zoned-school boundaries to facilitate stabilization of school placements. Maintaining their familiar school placement and routine can provide a sense of stability and academic continuity critical for the student at

this time. However, in some instances, a student placed in a BFP licensed placement shall move out of his/her attendance zone, either temporarily or permanently. Most students shall remain at the current school, unless it is determined that the child should change schools due to issues of safety or other circumstances that would not be in their best interest.

In some instances, a child in foster care experiences disruptions in their foster placement causing them to be moved to another home or facility. This mobility may or may not be the result of a planned change and a disruption of their academic progress can further set the child back emotionally and educationally.

When placement in the attendance zone is not available, the parties involved in serving the child shall decide if continued attendance at the student's current school or a change of school placement is in the child's best interest. In making the determination, staff should consider:

- Available School Transportation
- The student's academic, social, and emotional needs
- Safety or other risk factors
- Schedule/credit concerns for high school students (i.e. block vs. regular schedule)
- Therapeutic services/relationships
- The previous mobility of the student as well as potential plans for reunification
- Travel distance and length of bus ride, given child's age/development level
- Ability for continued participation in before or after school activities/clubs
- Input from the student, if age appropriate
- Input from the Surrogate Parent, if appropriate
- Input from the Guardian Ad Litem, if appropriate

Movement between schools should preferably take place at logical breaks in the school calendar such as the end of a marking period, semester, or school year.

XIII. Independent Living

Independent Living is a program designed to provide enhanced services to children in foster care beginning at the age of 13. The programming includes assessment, life skill training, leadership development, and educational assistance.

Children in foster care often have their educational experience interrupted, and as a result can fall behind their peers in scholastic excellence. Independent Living, in conjunction with the local schools, and workforce development boards can provide funding for educational assessment and other services in order to assist foster children in maintaining educational progress toward post secondary or vocational school. Children in need of these services should be referred through their Care Manager.

For young adults exiting foster care at the age of eighteen (18), Independent Living offers continued educational services, as well as financial and case management assistance. Eligibility is based on the legal status of clients along with other requirements including school attendance and maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Clients, who have not achieved their high school credentials by the time they reach 18 years of age, may choose to extend their foster care status up to the age of twenty one (21).

XIV. Exceptional Student Education

Services are provided to exceptional students based on the identified needs on the IEP (Individual Education Plan.). The IEP is a written plan that describes the special individual learning needs of a student with disabilities and the exceptional student education programs and services which will be given to that student. An initial IEP must be developed and reviewed annually.

If there are concerns about ESE services, an interim IEP can be requested at any time. A re-evaluation is completed at least once every three years. The re-evaluation plan addresses whether additional evaluation information is necessary in order to determine continued eligibility for services. A re-evaluation can also be requested prior to the three year time frame, if there are additional concerns regarding ESE eligibility. For example, if a child is identified as SLD, but there is supporting evidence that the child may be Emotionally Handicapped, the parent can request a re-evaluation to determine if the child meets eligibility criteria to obtain services for an Emotional/Behavioral Disability. Placements for services range from the general education classroom with supports and services provided in the classroom, to pull out services, to cluster classrooms where students with more complex needs may be placed from several different schools, to center schools, and other options in between. The least restrictive setting is required by law.

The following are ESE eligibility classifications:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Developmentally Delayed (DD) – for ages birth to 5 only
- Dual-Sensory Impaired
- Emotional/Behavioral Disability (EBD)
- Established Conditions (EC) – for ages birth to 2 only
- Hospital/Homebound (H/H)
- Language Impaired
- Orthopedically Impaired (OI)
- Other Health Impaired (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disabled (SLD)
- Speech Impaired
- Intellectual Disability (IND)

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visually Impaired (VI)

There are laws that protect children with disabilities.

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) – Purpose: “to ensure that all children with disabilities (ESE) have available to them a free appropriate public education (in the least restrictive environment) that emphasizes special education and related services to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living.”

Section 504- Protects children with disabilities who do not qualify for ESE under IDEA.

XV. Surrogate Parents

A surrogate parent is a person appointed by Brevard Public Schools to act in the place of a parent in safeguarding a child’s rights in the special education decision-making process under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – I.D.E.A. (20 U.S.C. Section 1415, 34 C.F.R. Section 300, F.A.C. Rule 6A-60333). A surrogate parent must be appointed for an ESE student (Exceptional Student Education –Special Education) or a child suspected of needing exceptional student education services in the following situations:

1. The parents rights have been terminated;
2. The child’s parent(s) cannot be identified and/or located, after reasonable efforts have been made to locate them; or
3. Situations as determined on a case-by-case basis, who are entitled by law to a surrogate but who do not meet the criteria listed above.

Children residing in any type of congregate care settings, such as shelter facilities and group homes, or residential treatment programs, including specialized therapeutic foster homes, will require a surrogate if they meet the criteria list above.

The purpose for appointment of a surrogate parent is to ensure that every ESE child, ages 0-21, (or child suspected of needing ESE services) has a knowledgeable adult to make educational decision on his or her behalf.

When a student registers for school in Brevard Public Schools and there is a question regarding the status of the parent/guardian, the foster care designee should be notified. If there is a natural parent, a step-parent with whom the child lives, a relative or legal guardian who is willing to serve, there is no need for a surrogate parent. A foster parent may act as the parent in the following situations:

- The foster parent has an ongoing, long-term parental relationship with the child.
- The foster parent is willing to participate in making educational decisions on the child's behalf.
- The foster parent has no interest that would conflict with the interest of the child.

After the school investigates the need and determines that a surrogate parent may be necessary, additional information is warranted. The staffing coordinator/ESE specialist, in collaboration with the foster care designee, shall e-mail a "Request for Surrogate Parent." The request should be completed by school staff only and sent to Kim Rogers, Ed.D., Director of Student Services, Home Education, and Students at Risk. The request should include the student number, type of living arrangements, name of the foster parent(s) or agency representative, and date of the ESE meeting. The completed request form is handled by the Office of Student Services, Home Education, and Students at Risk.

- Under no circumstances should a child's case worker from either the Department of Juvenile Justice or BFP sign a "Consent for Evaluation or Re-evaluation" or sign as "Parent" at an IEP meeting.

XVI. Documentation of Students in Foster Care

Students in the Foster Care System have opportunities afforded to them through Brevard Family Partnership and the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). Reports are required to be submitted regularly to the court; therefore, all students in the Foster Care System need to be reflected on the S318 panel with the appropriate designation each year of enrollment that the student has been in either Licensed Foster Care or Out of Home Care. Procedures are described below. See Appendix B for a screen shot with detailed instructions.

When a foster parent enrolls a student into a school, they will present documentation of the student's foster care status. The school is responsible to enter the foster care designation on the S318 panel. If a Case Manager, Guardian ad Litem, or Attorney ad Litem is also designated, that information should be entered on the contact (S315) panel. Case Managers, Guardian ad Litem, and Attorney ad Litem have access to all student information. Once notification is given to the school that this student has either been reunited with his/her family or that the student has aged out of the foster care system, the entry on the S318 panel should be changed. The Case Manager can remain on the S315 screen for 6 months, as the case remains open for review for that length of time.

Foster Care Designee _____ Student Name _____

Date of Entry _____ School _____

FOSTER CARE DESIGNEE CHECKLIST

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
_____	Review AS400 for educational data Contact Information ESE Information Academic History Graduation Status (if applicable) Test Scores Absence Detail Discipline Summary Current Grades
_____	Receive and review cumulative folder
_____	Notify ESE specialist to review current and possible ESE services, if appropriate
_____	Assist ESE specialist with determination of need for a surrogate parent
_____	Meet with student at least quarterly to monitor needs/interventions
_____	Document interventions; include grades, attendance, and behavior
_____	Facilitate transition if student is reassigned to another school or students leaves Foster Care
_____	Report monthly reporting data to the Office of Student Services, Home Education, and Students at Risk
_____	Notify Foster Care Guidance Counselor, if appropriate

S318. Yearly Local Data Elements

The second page of local elements is accessed by pressing <F11> and is titled “Yearly Local Data Elements”. The fields on this panel are considered year specific and must be reentered every year allowing the district to store and access longitudinal data for specific programs. The year at the top indicates the current year’s data. Please make sure the year is correct prior to entering the codes.

```

Panel: _____ S318. Yearly Local Data Elements S: 0000 Y: 2013 R
Std  K E S St Y Schl Gr Cl Thm Hmrm Tm Csl
9999990 BNAME, MNAME R W M A C 1011 12 17 016
N

( F )
-
CTE DOPP SGRP
- - -
AEPS1 AEPS2
- - -

1=Hlp 3=Exit 4=Prpt 7=Bwd 8=Fwd 9=Npg 11=View 12=Esc
Please type key element(s). Upd
    
```

Foster Care Indicator (F) - This local field is provided for use to indicate whether or not a student is in Foster Care. The following codes are available for input.

<u>Field</u>	<u>Definition</u>
F	Foster Care Indicator - This local field is provided for use to indicate whether or not a student is in Foster Care.
	Acceptable values:
	F = Student in Licensed Foster Care
	O = Student in Out of Home Care
	D = Student was dismissed from Licensed Foster Care or Out of Home Care.