

WHAT ABOUT EDUCATION?

WHAT FOSTER PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Long-term research shows that children and youth in out-of-home placements have double the dropout rates compared to their peers. It is important to be involved in your foster child's education to help ensure stability, continuity and success!

WHEN THE FOSTER CHILD IS FIRST PLACED IN YOUR HOME

- If they are not already enrolled in school, children in the Department of Human Services' (DHS) care can be immediately enrolled in public school without all documentation and paperwork. The required records and paperwork can follow.
- You are responsible to get your foster child to school **every day and on time** until a permanent transportation plan is put in place.
- Parents retain the right to make educational decisions on behalf of their children who are in placement unless their educational rights have been suspended by a court or the parent is failing to make educational decisions on behalf of the child.

KEEP FOSTER CHILD IN THE SAME SCHOOL

- Children in foster care should remain in their school of origin (school they attended before being placed in care) unless it is decided that it is not in their best interests to do so.
- It is up to DHS and the school district, with the input of others, to determine what school is in the child's best interest.
- DHS/Community Umbrella Agency (CUA) must collaborate with school districts to ensure school stability for all foster youth. This includes providing transportation if it is determined that it is in the child's best interest to remain in the same school.

ENROLL CHILD IN SCHOOL

- If the child needs to enroll or reenroll in school, make sure you bring the following with you:
 - The child
 - A letter with details about the child's placement (should be on DHS or CUA letterhead). This letter should include:
 - Youth is in legal custody of DHS
 - Placement address and date of placement
 - Resource parent name & contact information/Congregate Care Provider Social Worker & contact information
 - Assigned CUA Social Work team name & contact information
 - Your photo ID
 - If receiving special education bring a copy of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) if available to you.
 - If mentally gifted bring their evaluation form from the previous school if available to you.

OBTAINING THE CHILD'S RECORDS

- Caseworkers can ask for school records, and can share educational information with foster parents.
- If foster parents are acting as the child's Education Decision Maker, they have the right to obtain the child's educational records like report cards, transcripts, IEPs, etc.

RESOLVING SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES/ CONSENTS

- Biological/adoptive parents who are “attempting to act” on their child’s behalf, get to sign and decide their child’s educational needs.
- If the school determines the biological/adoptive parents are not responding or available to make decisions about the child’s educational needs, the school will reach out to the foster parents who are then able to make decisions for the child, including signing IEPs and requesting evaluations.
- Even if the biological/adoptive parents remain involved in the child’s education, the foster parents should be included in the educational process for the child. The school can and should invite anyone who has knowledge of the child to IEP meetings; you may need to introduce yourself and make a request to be included by the school.
- If the Court appoints someone as Education Decision Maker for the child, this person is the final decision maker. This overrides biological/adoptive parents or foster parents.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

- Introduce yourself to your foster child’s teachers and counselors and explain your relationship to the child so that you can help support their behavioral and educational needs
- Attend parent teacher conferences
- Encourage taking the PSATs or SATs
- Read to them or encourage that they read themselves (depending on their age)
- Involve them in school activities that are of interest to them
- Make their appointments AFTER SCHOOL (for example: doctor, therapy, etc.)
- Ensure a good night’s sleep and a healthy breakfast

FOR TEEN MOTHERS

Teen mothers are eligible for free childcare through the DHS Childcare eligibility unit.

For more information contact the DHS Education Support Center at DHS.Education.Support@phila.gov or 215-683-4001.

FOR OLDER YOUTH

ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE CENTER (AIC)

The AIC is a “one-stop” self-sufficiency center designed to help older youth (14 years of age and older) in out of home placement achieve their future goals. The Center provides a full range of services to help them transition into independent living and successful adulthood.

1415 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA
215-574-9194

HAVING TROUBLE?

First reach out to your assigned Social Work team and if you are not getting a response then contact the DHS Education Support Center at DHS.Education.Support@phila.gov or 215-683-4001.

Did you know?

THE COMMISSIONER’S ACTION RESPONSE OFFICE (CARO)

CARO responds to individuals who have questions, concerns, or complaints about any services provided by the Department of Human Services or its contracted providers, including Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs).

215-683-6000 | dhscaro@phila.gov

