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>4=Very successful</th>
<th>3= Moderately successful</th>
<th>2=Somewhat successful</th>
<th>1= Not very successful</th>
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When they first enter foster care

When children are placed outside their school boundaries, does the 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

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

<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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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?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

www.nrcpfc.org/cpg
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? ____________________________________________________________

Does 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>
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</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>
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</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>
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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 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>スタッフ</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster care staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinship staff</td>
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<td>Adoption staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health staff</td>
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<td>Supervisors</td>
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<td>Administrators</td>
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<td>Legal staff</td>
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<td>CASA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster Family Agency staff</td>
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</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