



## Tip Sheet

### School Stability

Federal law requires that children and youth entering foster care remain in the same school unless it is determined to be in the child's best interest to transfer to a different school. A school district, in collaboration with the child welfare agency, must consider all factors relating to a child's best interest, including appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity of the placement, when determining whether it is in a child's best interest to remain in the school of origin.

#### Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Requirements Highlights:

- Ensure children remain in the school of origin unless a determination is made that it is not in a child's best interest for the child to remain in the school of origin.
- Ensure when it is necessary to change a child's school, the child can be enrolled immediately in the new school, even when the required records for enrollment may not be readily available.
- Requires designated contacts be established by the education and child welfare agencies.
- Requires school districts develop local transportation plans to assist in maintaining school stability and keeping children in their school or origin. If there are additional costs for transportation, one of three conditions must be met: (1) child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the local school district for the cost of transportation, (2) the local school district agrees to pay for transportation, or (3) the local school district and child welfare agency agree to share the costs of transportation.

#### Definitions:

- **Enroll/Enrollment:** attending classes and participating fully in school activities (s.725(1))
- **School Stability:** a principle that presumes that keeping a homeless child or youth in their school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest (s.722(g)(3)(B)(i))
- **School of Origin:** the school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the homeless child or youth was last enrolled (s.722(g)(3)(l)(i))

#### Tips for Foster Parents:

- When contacted about a new placement, ask about school of origin, 504 Plans and IEPs.
- When children change placements, a collaborative decision should be made regarding the child's best interest. A staffing may be held to discuss the child's needs and best interest decision.
- The child should not be enrolled in a new school until an ESSA decision is made. Early communication between the child welfare agency and the school district point of contact is key.
- Provide input regarding transportation needs, feasibility of options available and afterschool needs.
- Participate in a staffing with the school district and child welfare agency, if necessary. Most staffings will be via telephone conference.

#### Partnership for Strong Families designated points of contact:

- Carol Ruth (352) 213-6199 [Carol.Ruth@pfsf.org](mailto:Carol.Ruth@pfsf.org) Alachua, Dixie, Gilchrist and Levy Counties
- James Weaver (850) 508-4579 [James.Weaver@pfsf.org](mailto:James.Weaver@pfsf.org) Baker, Bradford, Union, Columbia, Suwannee, Lafayette, Hamilton, Madison and Taylor Counties.

One of the most important supports that helps students succeed in school is a deeply involved and caring adult.