



To: Colorado Child Welfare Education Liaisons (CWEL)
From: Kristin Myers, State Coordinator for Foster Care Education
Date: August 14, 2017
Re: Back-to-School Information for Child Welfare Education Liaisons

As a new school year and the second year of foster care provisions in Every Student Succeeds Act begins, CDE is providing the following information to assist with serving your students in foster care.

This memo includes:

- An overview of the Foster Care Education Program at CDE
- An overview of the foster care provisions in ESSA
- Guidance in the role of a CWEL
- Supporting documents and resources
- Information regarding upcoming training opportunities and ways to reach out for additional support.

The Foster Care Education Program at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

The Foster Care Education Program at CDE supports local education agencies and communities serving students in foster care. This state program was launched in 2012 and is dedicated to helping students in foster care excel academically, complete courses and advance to the next grade, and continue on a path to postsecondary success. It provides assistance and training for key stakeholders including, CWEL's, special education directors, school administrators, and county child welfare agencies. It also includes a data-sharing and research partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and University of Northern Colorado.

The Foster Care Education Program is designed to work with K-12 public schools and districts in Colorado to focus on these elements:

- Provide assistance and guidance on the implementation of the foster care provisions in ESSA
- Increase learning supports for students in foster care
- Implement effective trauma-informed strategies for educators and professionals working with students in foster care
- Strengthen partnerships with local child welfare agencies and community organizations
- Coordinate educational transition services
- Collaborate with the courts, state agencies and child advocacy groups

For the purposes of this document, the term "student in foster care" is defined as an individual that has experienced an active foster care placement and has been enrolled in a Colorado public school during the time period or school year referenced. The foster care placement could be brief, such as a few days, or might occur across multiple years.



Foster Care Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA was signed into law on December 10, 2015. This federal law replaced the *No Child Left Behind Act* and amends Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA contains specific provisions related to students in foster care for the first time. These provisions are intended to ensure educational stability, minimize disruptions for students in foster care, ensure collaboration between state and local education agencies and child welfare agencies, and place an emphasis on cross-agency collaboration in the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Fostering Connections Act). ESSA guidance encourages educational and child welfare agencies to consider ways to support better outcomes for students in foster care and facilitate successful transitions. For more information, review the joint letter from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhseffectivedatesdcl.pdf.

Role of a Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL)

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 22-32-138, each school district and the state Charter School Institute (CSI), shall designate an employee of the school district or CSI to act as the child welfare education liaison for the district or for state charter schools. In lieu of designating an employee, a school district or the state charter school institute may contract with an individual to act as the child welfare education liaison.

- The duties of the liaison should include, need not be limited to: working with child placement agencies, county departments, and the state department of human services to facilitate the prompt and appropriate placement, transfer, and enrollment in school of students in out-of-home placement.
- By August 15 of every school year, each school district and CSI shall report to the state coordinator for foster care education the name and contact information of the CWEL.
- There are other key parts of state law and ESSA that prohibit delaying transfer of records or enrollment because of fees owed (book fines), costs for uniforms, lab fees, etc.

Note: Effective August 10, 2017, pursuant to HB17-1301, a school district shall not withhold, and shall ensure that a school of the school district does not withhold records required for enrollment in another school or institution of higher education or the diploma, transcript, or grades of any student who fails to pay any assessed fine or fee, to return or replace textbooks or library resources, or to return or replace any school property at the completion of any semester or school year.

- A school district or school in which a student in out-of-home placement is enrolled shall waive all fees that would otherwise be assessed against the student, including but not limited to any general fees, fees for books, fees for lab work, fees for participation in in-school or extracurricular activities, and fees for before-school or after-school programs.
- The school district or school shall not limit the opportunity of a student in out-of-home placement to participate in in-school and extracurricular activities and before-school and after-school programs due to waiver of the participation fees.
- CWEL duties **DO NOT** include data collection at this time. State-level data collection is included the foster care education provisions in ESSA. For the 2017-18 school year, CDE is reporting foster care educational data to the U.S. Department of Education.



Back-to-School CWEL Information

There are several documents that may prove helpful during back-to-school time. These documents include:

- Foster Care Education Fact Sheet
- Legislative Overview for Foster Care
- American Bar Association Q&A regarding foster care provisions in ESSA
- US Department of Education Non-Regulatory Guidance
- A document containing a 3-year average of youth in foster care per school district
- CWEL Job Description – *soon to be released*

All of the above mentioned documents and additional resources and materials are available on the [Foster Care Education webpage](#)

Foster Care Training Opportunities

Trainings and meetings will be scheduled throughout the year, and are also available upon request. Please feel free to reach out to Kristin Myers (myers_k@cde.state.co.us) to request a training for your local region or school district.

Dates and registration information will be sent via email, and through The CDE *Scoop*, an electronic weekly update to schools and districts as appropriate. [Click here to sign-up for the Scoop.](#) Please reach out with additional requests or specific technical assistance needed.

As always, thank you for your passion and commitment in helping our most vulnerable students access educational opportunities and reach academic success.

