

General Description:

TEA's Foster Care Education Initiative is housed in TEA's Division of Highly Mobile and At-Risk Student Programs for the purpose of implementing statutory foster care education requirements and collaborating with state-level interagency initiatives to improve education outcomes for children and youth in Texas' foster care system. Collaboration at the state and local level removes barriers to educational stability; promotes best practices for serving students; and helps education and child welfare systems develop shared protocols, tools, and resources to address the achievement gap and improve student outcomes.

Authority:

Federal:

- Every Student Success Act (ESSA), 2015 – ESSA Title I, Part A foster care provisions effective December 10, 2016.
- Fostering Connections to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351)
 - Federal foster care legislation mandates the *coordination* of child welfare with education agencies to ensure school stability and immediate and appropriate school enrollment.

Texas Education Code – Several state statutes address the education of students in foster care and provide direction for the agency including:

- TEC § 7.029 – Data sharing and data collection requirements
- TEC § 25.001(g) – Attendance when placed outside of school zone
- TEC § 25.001(g-1) – Attendance in that school regardless if the students remains in DFPS managing conservatorship
- TEC § 25.007 – Transition assistance requirements, including designated Liaison Officer at TEA to address educational issues
- TEC § 25.087 – Excused absences for court-ordered appointments
- TEC § 33.904 – District and Charter Foster Care Liaison designation, tracking and training requirements.

Foster Care Initiatives – Core Activities:

- Development of resources: TEA Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide, Confidentiality and Information Sharing Guide, Transition Planning Guide for students receiving SPED services, others.
- Presentation at numerous education trainings statewide
- Implementation of statutory requirements designed to address the educational needs of students in foster care
- Development of policy and practice guidance to support districts and charters in addressing the educational needs of students in foster care
- Provision of technical assistance to Texas School District Foster Care Liaisons and regions in implementing foster care policy and practice
- Participation in implementation of recommendations of the *Texas Blueprint*. TEA staff participate in collaborative cross-system, multi-stakeholder teams to address policy, practice, and system improvements.

Foster Care Facts: Texas

- Approximately 27,000 students experienced foster care during the 2014-15 school year.
- Youth in foster care dropout of school at significantly higher rates than other youth.
- Students in foster care are almost three times more likely (25%) to receive special education services compared to students in the general population (9%).
- Students in foster care receive out of school disciplinary suspensions at more than three times (14%) the rate of students statewide (4%).
- 45% of students in foster care attended 2+ schools in one school year. 6 times that of students not in foster care (2.7%).

Why School Stability Matters:

- Education stability and school success are linked to positive life outcomes.
- Stability in school creates positive protective factors, reduces risks, and strengthens student connections and achievement.
- For every school move, foster care students are more likely to fall behind in school; thus, increasingly over-aged, under-credited, and at-risk for dropout.

Mobility Impacts Education:

- Problems occur during school moves when transferring information and documentation between education and child welfare systems.
- Education records may not transfer in a complete and timely manner; causing youth to lose credits, be placed in inappropriate classes, to repeat classes, and/or to repeat costly assessments.

Source:

- TEA Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide, www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf
- PEIMS Data 2012-13, 2014-15
- TEA Foster Care & Student Success website: <http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>