

## 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 of if the students remain 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.

## Texas Administrative Code

Commissioner rules to mitigate barriers to school transitions and support learning and academic achievement:

- 19 TAC 89, Sub Chapter FF –Transition Assistance for Highly Mobile Students Who Are Homeless or in Substitute Care

## Foster Care Initiatives – Core Activities:

- **Development of Resources:** Led comprehensive update to the TEA Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide, creation of Transition Assistance resources, development of ESSA guidance and other tools.
- **Professional Development:** Provide presentations at ESC, education conferences, and trainings statewide.
- **Policy Development & Statutory Implementation:** Support implementation of statutory requirements, development of policies, and participation in statutory workgroups to address the educational needs of students in foster care.
- **Technical Assistance and Support:** Share guidance with education leaders, School District Foster Care Liaisons, ESC Foster Care Champions and others to build capacity for foster care assistance.
- **Collaboration:** Participate in cross-system, multi-stakeholder teams to address policy, practice, and system improvements. TEA works closely with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission.

## Foster Care Facts: Texas

- Over 14,000 students experience foster care during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Youth in foster care dropout of school at significantly higher rates than other youth.
- In 2020, students in foster care dropped out of school (23%) compared to students in the general population, nearly 4 times the rate of all students statewide (5.4%).
- In 2020, students in foster care graduate at a lower rate (61%) vs (90.3%) for all students statewide.

## 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 system.
- 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.

## Sources:

- [TEA Foster Care & Student Success Resource Guide](#)
- [PEIMS Data 2021-22 Federal State Report Card](#)
- [TEA Foster Care & Student Success website:](#)