

## *Highly Mobile and At-Risk Student Programs Division*

### PEIMS Coding

**1. When a student leaves foster care, do they remain coded for the entire school year?**

A student should remain coded for the entire school year, regardless of whether the student is no longer in foster care due to reunification with parents, an adoption, or another outcome.

The Foster Care Indicator code does not carry over from year to year. A student's time in the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) Managing Conservatorship is temporary. The student must be re-identified in PEIMS at the beginning of each school year.

**2. Are foster care students also coded as "at-risk" under [TEC 29.081](#)?**

Yes. Students enrolled with documentation that indicates they are currently in foster care must be coded with PEIMS at-risk indicator code #11.

Students in foster care may also meet other criteria for the at-risk indicators. These should be considered separately from a student's foster care status. If a student leaves foster care, they may continue to be coded as at-risk under other qualifying criteria.

In some circumstances, students in or formerly in foster care should be coded with PEIMS at-risk indicator code #13 under [TEC 29.081](#)(d)(13). By definition alone, students in or formerly in foster care do not meet the state criteria for indicator code #13.

For more information visit, [TEA Compensatory Education FAQ](#).

**3. *\*Updated\** How do I code a student who is from another state's foster care system?**

Starting September 1, 2021, code #3 was added to PEIMS Foster Care Type Code table (C196) to capture the status of a pre-kindergarten student who is currently in or ever has been in foster care in another state.

This is due to the passage of HB 725 by the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature (2021), which amends TEC § 29.2153 (b) and requires Texas schools to provide free pre-k to children who are currently in or were previously in foster care in another state or territory, if the child resides in Texas.

See the 'Prekindergarten Qualifications' section below question #5, for more information about what documentation may be used for this purpose.

For all other ages and grades of students, if the student is not in the Texas DFPS Managing Conservatorship, they are not coded as foster care in PEIMS; however, they are eligible for school nutrition and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) benefits (see the “Other section” of the FAQ).<sup>1</sup>

We do, however, encourage LEA Foster Care Liaisons and local educational agencies (LEAs) to look out for the well-being of students who are in these scenarios (currently in or were previously in the child welfare system of another state) even though they are not identified as ‘foster care’ for PEIMS purposes.

#### 4. **\*Updated\* - Can students in foster care also be coded as homeless?**

Students who are awaiting foster care placement are generally not eligible to be identified as homeless.

However, there are scenarios when a student in foster care is living in a setting that meets the definition of homeless under McKinney-Vento.

Additionally, there are scenarios when a child remains in DFPS Managing Conservatorship but returns to live with their biological family. If the family is living in a setting that would be considered homeless for McKinney-Vento purposes, the child would be identified as homeless.

For more information concerning students in foster care and McKinney-Vento eligibility, contact the LEA [McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison](#).

## Prekindergarten Qualifications

### 1. Do students in or formerly in Texas DFPS Managing Conservatorship qualify for free Pre-K?

Yes.<sup>2</sup> All students in or formerly in Texas DFPS Managing Conservatorship qualify for free Pre-K in the State of Texas. Caregivers need to provide documentation of foster care status upon enrollment. Caregivers also receive a verification letter from DFPS stating they qualify for this benefit. For students currently in DFPS Managing Conservatorship, the school may accept the verification letter, Education Decision-Maker 2085 E, 2085, or redacted court order. For Texas students no longer in DFPS Managing Conservatorship, an adoption decree or verification letter from DFPS is needed. Both forms of documentation are acceptable for this purpose. Caregivers and schools can obtain a verification letter by emailing the DFPS Pre-K verification mailbox: [prekverificationltrs@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:prekverificationltrs@dfps.texas.gov).<sup>3</sup>

For information on Pre-K qualification for students from another state’s child welfare system, see Question 4 of this section.

<sup>1</sup> Although TEC only requires PEIMS reporting of students who are in DFPS Managing Conservatorship, students in the managing conservatorship of another state should receive the same benefits as students in DFPS.

<sup>2</sup> [TEC 29.153\(b\)\(6\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> DFPS. *Child Protective Services Handbook*. 15000 Education.

[https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS\\_pg\\_x15000.asp#CPS\\_15212\\_1](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x15000.asp#CPS_15212_1)

### 2. How do caregivers and schools obtain the DFPS Pre-K verification letter?

Please email the DFPS Pre-K verification mailbox: [prekverificationltrs@dfps.texas.gov](mailto:prekverificationltrs@dfps.texas.gov). They will look up the student and provide the Pre-K verification letter for the caregiver to provide to the school. Additionally, [DFPS Education Specialists](#) are available to troubleshoot education related issues.

### 3. **\*New\*** Does the Pre-K verification letter received from DFPS ever expire?

A child (of appropriate age) is eligible if they are currently in DFPS conservatorship, or if they were in the past. Even if the child has subsequently been adopted or for whatever reason is no longer in DFPS care, the child is still eligible if the age criteria are met. Therefore, any verification letter that establishes that the child was ever in DFPS conservatorship remains valid until the child ages out of Pre-K.

### 4. **\*Updated\*** Do students in or formerly in foster care from another state's child welfare system qualify for free Pre-K in Texas?

Yes, all students residing in Texas currently in or formerly in foster care from another state's child welfare system qualify for free Pre-K in the State of Texas.

This is due to the passage of HB 725 by the 87th Texas Legislature (2021), which amended TEC § 29.153 (b), to provide prekindergarten eligibility for children who are currently in or were previously in foster care in another state or territory, if the child resides in Texas.

This is an adjustment from previous TEA FAQ guidance that noted that students currently in foster care from another state were eligible because they are considered "educationally disadvantaged" under state law (TEC § 29.153(b)(2)). Although this provision still applies, state law was amended to clearly include students, both in or formerly in foster care from another state or territory, for this benefit.

### 5. **\*New\*** What documentation can be used to verify a prekindergarten student's foster care status from another state?

LEAs may request official documentation such as redacted court order or official paperwork from the state or regional child welfare system to verify a student's foster care involvement for this benefit.

## Post-secondary Education

### 1. What financial supports are available to help students in foster care pay for college?

- Students who are currently in or were previously in foster care are eligible to have college tuition and fees waived at Texas state-supported colleges or universities, medical schools, dental schools, junior colleges, and technical institutes.

Visit the [DFPS State College Tuition Waiver](#) webpage for more information.

- The Texas Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program is a federally funded program designed to assist with the education and training needs of students in or formerly in DFPS Managing Conservatorship. Students can receive up to \$5,000 a year to attend college or vocational programs.

Visit the [DFPS ETV Program](#) webpage for more information.

- The Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Services program provides support for students in DFPS Managing Conservatorship who are at least 16 years or older. PAL benefits can include a transitional living allowance, aftercare room and board assistance, and other support services for independent living.

Visit the [DFPS Preparation for Adult Living](#) webpage for more information.

For a comprehensive overview of post-secondary attainment for students in foster care, see the [Texas Higher Education Foster Care Liaison information and reference guide](#).

See also [Chapter 13 of the Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide](#) for more information on post-secondary education opportunities.

## Foster Care Liaisons

### 2. How do we enter a foster care liaison into AskTED?

- Districts must submit their liaison information to TEA through the district's AskTED administrator. Include your liaison's name, email address, and phone and fax numbers.
- Charter schools must submit their foster care liaison to the Charter School Division at TEA directly via (512) 463-9575 or [CharterAskTED@tea.texas.gov](mailto:CharterAskTED@tea.texas.gov). Include your liaison's name, email address, and phone and fax numbers. This information will be added to the AskTED directory.

Visit the [Foster Care webpage](#) for more information.

## Resources

### 1. How do I get on the TEA Foster Care listserv?

Click "[Sign Up for Updates](#)" on the [TEA website](#) menu bar. Type in your email, then select the *Foster Care and Student Success* newsletter. We also recommend signing up for the *At-Risk and Highly Mobile Student Program Division* newsletter, as well as the other Special Student Populations divisions.

### 2. How can I contact TEA with questions regarding students in foster care?

Please send an email to: [fostercareliaison@tea.texas.gov](mailto:fostercareliaison@tea.texas.gov)

## Other

### 1. Do students in foster care qualify for nutrition benefits?

Yes, because the student is in foster care (regardless of state), the student is categorically eligible to receive federal school nutrition benefits. Caregivers of students in foster care do not have to complete a separate application for these programs. By directly certifying the foster child, the student's household application is not subject to verification unless non-foster students are listed on the household application.

For more information, see the Texas Department of Agriculture [ARM Guide, Eligibility Determination, Section 4](#) (2020).

This [USDA, HHSC, USDE tri-agency letter for Chief School Officers](#) outlines the categorical eligibility of students in foster care for free school meals. It includes a sample letter LEAs and schools can utilize to reach students and families who are not receiving this benefit.

### 2. Do Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) benefits apply for students from another state's foster care system who are currently living in Texas?

Yes. ESSA Educational Stability requirements apply to all students in foster care enrolled in schools in the state they reside.

For more information, see the [Non-Regulatory Guidance on Title I, Part A](#) from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.