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## **Best Interest Determination for Foster Care Liaisons Procedure (INS-P053)**

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System

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### **1.0 SCOPE:**

- 1.1 This procedure outlines the process for Foster Care Liaisons to accommodate the Best Interest Determination (BID) procedure conducted in collaboration with the state of Tennessee's Department of Children's Services (DCS) and Foster Care Liaisons outside of CMCSS.

The online version of this procedure is official. Therefore, all printed versions of this document are unofficial copies.

### **2.0 RESPONSIBILITY:**

- 2.1 Foster Care Liaison

### **3.0 APPROVAL AUTHORITY:**

- 3.1 Chief Academic Officer

### **4.0 DEFINITIONS:**

- 4.1 Foster Care: Foster care is defined as 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility.
- 4.2 Child Welfare Agency: Child Welfare Agency for purposes of this document is defined as the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) or agencies contracted out from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.
- 4.3 School of Origin: School of origin is the school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of the placement change.
- 4.4 School of Zone: School of zone is the school in which a child's new home placement resides in foster care. If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of zone would then be considered the school in which the child would enroll if the team determines the child is unable to remain at the school of origin.
- 4.5 Points of Contacts (POC): Points of contact are the individuals assigned by their respective agencies to represent during the Best Interest Determination process.

DCS POC: Educational Specialists, Case Managers, Team Leads

LEA POC: District Foster Care Liaison



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### **5.0 PROCEDURE:**

- 5.1 The DCS Education Specialist or Family Service Worker will notify the CMCSS Foster Care Liaison serving as Point of Contact (POC) when a student enters foster care or changes foster care placement.
  - 5.1.1 Upon notification, DCS will provide an Educational Passport to CMCSS.
  - 5.1.2 CMCSS and DCS will collaborate to schedule a Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting within **5 school days** that includes:
    - A. The DCS Point of Contact (DCS POC);
    - B. The LEA Point of Contact (LEA POC);
    - C. The educational decision maker for the student; DCS will contact the biological parent/legal guardian if appropriate;
    - D. The school of origin/school of zone designee as assigned; and
    - E. Any other key partners for decision making.
- 5.2 The Foster Care Liaison serving as the LEA POC conducts the BID meeting.
  - 5.2.1 The team will consider a range of factors to determine whether the student should remain at their school of origin or transition to their school of zone, which includes those listed below. This is not an exhaustive list of factors that may be considered by the team:
    - 1. Preferences of the student;
    - 2. Preferences of the student's educational decision maker(s);
    - 3. The student's attachment to the school, including meaningful relationships with staff and peers;
    - 4. Placement of the student's siblings;
    - 5. Influence of the school climate on the student, including safety;
    - 6. The availability and quality of the services in the school to meet the student's educational needs;
    - 7. History of school transfers and how they have impacted the student;
    - 8. How the length of the commute would impact the student;



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9. Whether the student is receiving special education and related services, and if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin; and
10. Whether the student requires specialized services including, but not limited to EL/504/IEP, and, if so, the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin.
11. Transportation costs should not be considered when determining a student's best interest, but transportation will be discussed to ensure an appropriate plan is in place for the student. In the event of a dispute following the BID meeting or over who will pay the additional costs for transportation, refer to the associated documents titled "Procedures for Students in Foster Care: Dispute Resolution for Best Interest and/or Transportation."

5.2.2 Once a decision has been reached, the Best Interest Determination Form will be completed by the LEA POC and sent to the DCS POC.

5.2.3 If the team decides it is in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin, the student will be allowed to remain. If special transportation to the school of origin is required, LEA POC will send the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Transportation to School of Origin Form to the DCS POC to complete and submit.

5.2.4 If the team decides it is **not** in the best interest of the student to remain in the school of origin, DCS will withdraw the student from the school of origin. After the withdrawal has been completed, the Child Welfare Agency or foster parent will continue with enrollment to the new school of zone. If the school of zone is within CMCSS, DCS will be notified to continue with enrollment at the CMCSS Enrollment Center. The Child Welfare Agency or the foster parent must provide a completed Education Passport and School Notification Letter to the CMCSS Enrollment Center. DCS will have 30 calendar days to provide accompanying enrollment documents to the CMCSS Enrollment Center, if they are not provided at the time of enrollment.

### **6.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS:**

- 6.1 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95) §1111(g); §1112(c)
  - 6.2 Tennessee Code Annotated §49-6-3901
  - 6.3 Procedures for Students in Foster Care: Transportation
  - 6.4 Procedures for Students in Foster Care: Dispute Resolution for Best Interest and/or Transportation
  - 6.5 Tennessee Department of Children's Services Transportation to School of Origin
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6.6 Tennessee Department of Children's Services Dispute Resolution Process-  
Transportation

**7.0 RECORD RETENTION TABLE:**

<u>Identification</u>	<u>Storage</u>	<u>Retention</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Protection</u>
Best Interest Determination Form	Fostering Connections Office	3 school years	Destroy after three school years	Secured office

**8.0 REVISION HISTORY:**

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Rev.</u>	<u>Description of Revision:</u>
		Initial Release

**\* \* \* E n d o f P r o c e d u r e \* \* \***