

# Getting Them Ready

K-12 SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE



# Eligibility

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## Foster Care means:

- DSHS/CA (or a licensed or certified child placing agency) has placement and care responsibility for a child/youth.
  - Twenty-four hours-per-day, temporary, substitute care away parents or guardians
  - Includes any out-of-home care (including a relative or suitable other), *so long as the child is under the placement and care responsibility of DSHS/CA.*
  - *May also include the period of time needed to transition a student back home.*



# Identification

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Students in foster care will be identified using the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) through a collaborative effort between OSPI and DSHS.

DSHS/CA is required to notify LEAs each time a student enters care, changes placement, or returns home.



# School of Origin

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- The school of origin is the school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care.
- An SEA and its LEAs must ensure that a child in foster care enrolls or remains in his or her school of origin unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. (ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i)).
- If a child's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of the placement change.



# Best-Interest Decision-Making

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- LEAs should work with local child welfare agencies to develop a clear protocol on how to make best interest determinations
- Decisions should be made using child-centered criteria
  - Transportation is only considered in the context of the impact it has on the child/youth – there is no district line , county line, state line, or mileage limit
- The LEA must ensure that a child remains in his or her school of origin while this determination is being made (See ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i))
- An LEA must ensure that a child remains in his or her school of origin while disputes are being resolved to minimize disruptions and reduce the number of moves between schools (See ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i))



# Transportation

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- An LEA receiving Title I, Part A funds must collaborate with Children's Administration or other supervising agencies to ensure that transportation for children in foster care is provided, arranged, and funded. (ESEA Section 1112(c)(5)(B))
- Procedures must ensure that:
  1. Children in foster care needing transportation to their schools of origin will promptly receive that transportation in a cost effective manner.
  2. If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the school district will provide such transportation if:
    - a) The local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the cost of such transportation;
    - b) The LEA agrees to pay for the cost; or
    - c) The LEA and local child welfare agency agree to share the cost (ESEA 1112(c)(5)(B))

Districts must provide transportation while disputes are being resolved.



# Immediate Enrollment

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- Immediate enrollment means that a child in foster care should be enrolled in, and attending, a new school as soon as possible.
- Enrollment must not be denied or delayed because documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided. (See ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)).
  - The enrolling school must immediately contact a child's school of origin to obtain the relevant records and documentation (ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(iii)), and the school of origin should immediately transfer those records.



# Title I, Part A

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- Categorical eligibility

- All children and youth in foster care are categorically eligible for Title I, Part A services, whether or not they live in a Title I, Part A school attendance area, attend a Title I school, or meet the academic standards required of other children for eligibility

- Funding Limitations

- Title I, Part A states that funds cannot supplant other state or local funds.
- The homeless set-aside must remain intact and cannot be reduced or repurposed to serve children in foster care
- School district Foster Care Liaisons or other staff should contact the student's case worker or foster parent as a first priority to meet that student's non-academic needs. For example, the basic needs of students in foster care such as clothing, birth certificates, immunizations, and medical services are first and foremost the responsibility of CA. School districts may however, use Title I, Part A funds if other sources are not available.





# State Laws

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## WA STATE LAWS REGARDING STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE



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# Enrollment and Attendance – LEAs

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## **RCW 28A.225.330(7) - Enrolling students from other districts**

Prevents school districts from **denying** or **delaying** the enrollment of dependent youth, and requires school districts to retrieve school records (educational history) within **two business days**

## **RCW 28A.225.023 - Unexpected or excessive absences—Support for school work.**

Requires districts to *monitor* the unexpected or excessive absences of dependent youth, *proactively support* the youth's school work so the student does not fall behind, and *avoid* suspension or expulsion based on truancy



# Records and Graduation – LEAs

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## **RCW 28A.150.510 - Transmittal of education records to DSHS**

Requires the prompt/timely transmission of student records to DSHS for appropriate case planning and maximizing the student's academic achievement

## **RCW 28A.320.192 - On-time grade level progression and graduation.**

Requires school districts to facilitate the on-time graduation of student in foster care by:

- Waiving specific courses if similar coursework has been completed in another district,
- Providing an alternative means to complete required coursework,
- Consolidating unresolved coursework and providing opportunities for credit accrual, or
- Facilitating the graduation from the sending district where graduation requirements were met



# Resources

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# Resources

The screenshot shows the OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction) website for the Foster Care Education Program. The page has a blue header with the OSPI logo and navigation links. A sidebar on the left contains a list of links, with red arrows pointing to 'State and Federal Requirements', 'Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts', 'Postsecondary Education', and 'Frequently Asked Questions'. The main content area features the program title, a sign-up link for email/text alerts, and detailed information about the program's goals and resources. A 'What's New' box on the right highlights new availability and contact information.

State of Washington  
OSPI  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

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*Foster Care*

Foster Care Education Program

State and Federal Requirements

Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts

Postsecondary Education

Frequently Asked Questions

For more information:  
Miss Lewis  
Program Supervisor  
Foster Care Education  
60-725-6050  
[miss.Lewis@k12.wa.us](mailto:miss.Lewis@k12.wa.us)

[Sign up for email/text alerts](#)

### Foster Care Education Program

Improving the Educational Outcomes of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Schools, child welfare agencies, communities, and families must work together to provide the equitable opportunities, specialized services, and useful supports that are essential for students in foster care to be successful in school and in life.

The Foster Care Program at OSPI supports students in foster care by encouraging innovative practices that reduce educational disruptions, strengthen school stability, and improve academic performance.

As part of the Student Support division, the Foster Care Education Program partners with educators, foster parents, social workers, state agencies, and advocates as they work to support the whole child through evidence-based, best-practices and collaboration.

[State and Federal Requirements](#)  
Find state and federal laws that support students in foster care along with guidance to help with implementation and advocacy.

[Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts](#)  
Find contact information by county, DSHS region, and school district for liaisons and Children's Administration staff who can help resolve issues and provide support.

[Postsecondary Education](#)  
Find information about helping students in foster care with financial aid and other post-secondary resources.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)  
Find answers to the most frequently asked questions about Foster Care Education in Washington State.

**What's New**  
Now Available!  
[Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts](#)

**Questions?**  
[fostercare@k12.wa.us](mailto:fostercare@k12.wa.us)  
360-725-6050



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**OSPI** | Foster Care Education

## ESSA requires school districts to designate a Foster Care Liaison

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA, 2015), contains key protections for students in foster care to promote school stability and success. ESSA requires state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to collaborate with child welfare partners in an effort to improve the educational outcomes of children and youth in care.



# Liaisons



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*Foster Care*

**Foster Care Education Program**

**State and Federal Requirements**

**Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts**

**Postsecondary Education**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

For more information:  
Jill Lewis  
Program Supervisor  
Foster Care Education  
360-725-6050  
[jill.Lewis@k12.wa.us](mailto:jill.Lewis@k12.wa.us)

**Contacts**

- [Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts](#)
- [Regional Contacts](#)
- [State Contact](#)

**Update your Liaison Contact Information**

**Foster Care Liaisons/DSHS Contacts**

\* Click on column headings to sort.

**NOTE: This list is in the process of being updated as more districts identify Foster Care Liaisons.**

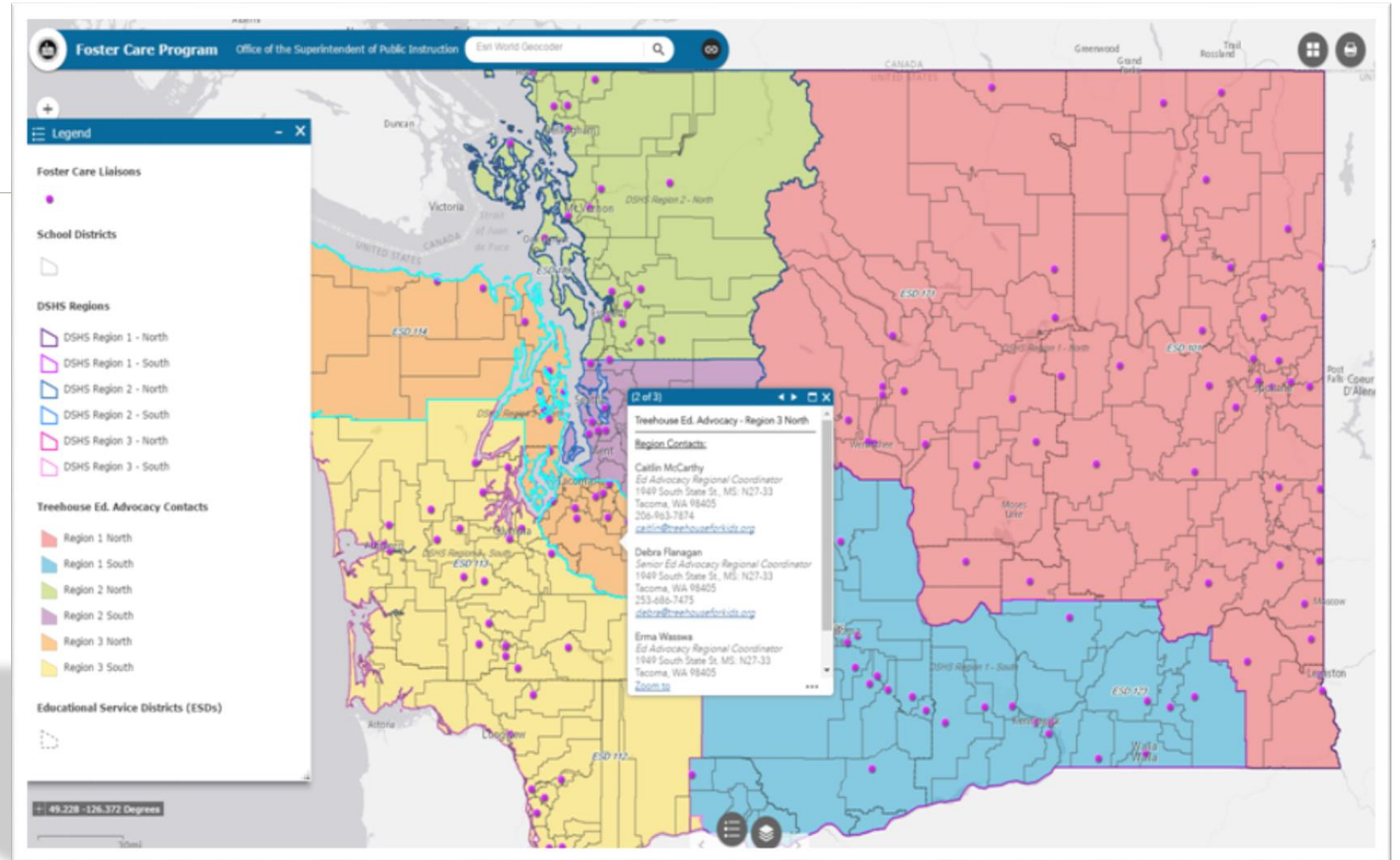
*DSHS Region	*County	*School District	*Liaison/Title	Phone	email
Region 3 (North/South)	Grays Harbor	Aberdeen School District	Marnie Ranheim Counselor	360-538-7807	<a href="mailto:mranheim@asd5.org">mranheim@asd5.org</a>
Region 3 (North/South)	Lewis	Adna School District	Renee Quinn Counselor	360-748-8552	<a href="mailto:quinnr@adnaschools.org">quinnr@adnaschools.org</a>
Region 1 (North)	Lincoln	Almira School District	Shauna Schmerer Superintendent	509-639-2414	<a href="mailto:sschmerer@achsd.org">sschmerer@achsd.org</a>
Region 2 (North/South)	Skagit	Anacortes School District	Connie Martin Executive Director of Special Services	360-293-1216	<a href="mailto:cmartin@asd103.org">cmartin@asd103.org</a>
Region 1 (North)	Asotin	Asotin-Anatone	John Heley Director of Student	509-243-3102	<a href="mailto:jheley@aasd.wednet.edu">jheley@aasd.wednet.edu</a>



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# The Map

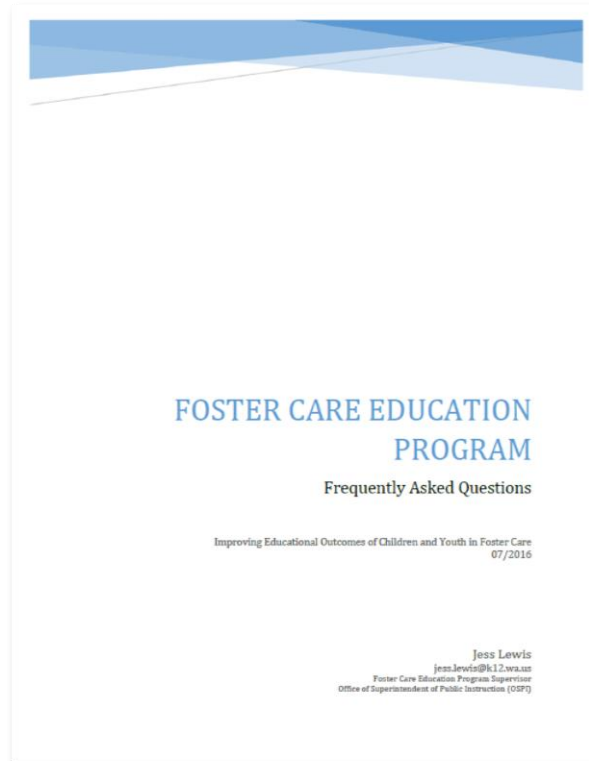


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# FAQ



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# School Selection

## Best Practices: School Selection for Children and Youth in Foster Care

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: Foster Care Education Program

### Introduction

In December 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and created new protections for children in foster care. These provisions, which take effect on December 10, 2016, complement those in the Fostering Connections Act of 2008 and require SEAs and LEAs to work with child welfare agencies to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care.

### Making Best-Interest Decisions

Children in out-of-home care tend to have many adults involved in their lives, and it may be unclear who has the authority to make general education decisions for them.

Usually, birth parents or caregivers are the decision makers, even if a child has been removed from the home, but courts in Washington State may appoint an educational decision maker who is neither the parent or the caregiver. General educational decision-making rights may be given to foster parents, caseworkers, relatives, or other advocates. In these cases, for children in out-of-home care, the educational decision maker will assume the rights of the parents under the Title I, Part A provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act, including the right to select the school in the child's best interest and pursue any disputes with the school district.

The school must be informed of who has decision-making authority for each student; the responsibility of informing the school typically lies with the student's child welfare caseworker.

In order for parents or other educational decision-makers to make informed decisions about selecting the school that is in a child's best interest, they need to have as much practical information as possible.

Every LEA has a local foster care liaison, who must ensure each eligible child receives his or her rights under ESSA, including the right to attend the school of origin. The local liaison and school or district staff can play an instrumental role in assisting with choosing the school that is in a student's best interest. For children in foster care, schools should identify Children's Administration staff to assist with the school selection provisions of the Fostering Connections Act.

### Steps to Best-Interest Decision-Making

LEAs should work with local child welfare agencies to develop a clear protocol on how to make best interest determinations. This process should include making every effort to gather meaningful input from relevant parties, in addition to required child welfare and school representatives, in deciding what school placement is in a child's best interest. The following

Adapted from the Best Practices: School Selection for Students in Out-of-Home Care issue brief developed by the Legal Center for Foster Care and The National Center for Homeless Education, Fall 2009

## School Selection: A Checklist for Decision Making

School of Origin Considerations		Local Attendance Area School Considerations	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Continuity of instruction</b> <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her past.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Continuity of instruction</b> <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her future.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age and grade placement of the student</b> <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age and grade placement of the student</b> <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in the school of origin is not particularly critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic strength</b> <i>The child's academic performance is weak, and the child would fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic strength</b> <i>The child's academic performance is strong and at grade level, and the child would likely recover academically from a school transfer.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Social and emotional state</b> <i>The child is suffering from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, and does not want to leave.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Social and emotional state</b> <i>The child seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, and does not mind transferring.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs</b> <i>The advantages of remaining in the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs</b> <i>A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Personal safety of the student</b> <i>The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Personal safety of the student</b> <i>The local attendance area school has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Student's need for special instruction</b> <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the school of origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Student's need for special instruction</b> <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the local attendance area school.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location</b> <i>The student's current living situation is outside of the school-of-origin attendance zone, but his/her living situation or location continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by remaining in the school of origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location</b> <i>The student's current living situation appears stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the student will benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in his local community.</i>

Adapted from the Best Practices: School Selection for Students in Out-of-Home Care issue brief developed by the Legal Center for Foster Care and The National Center for Homeless Education, Fall 2009

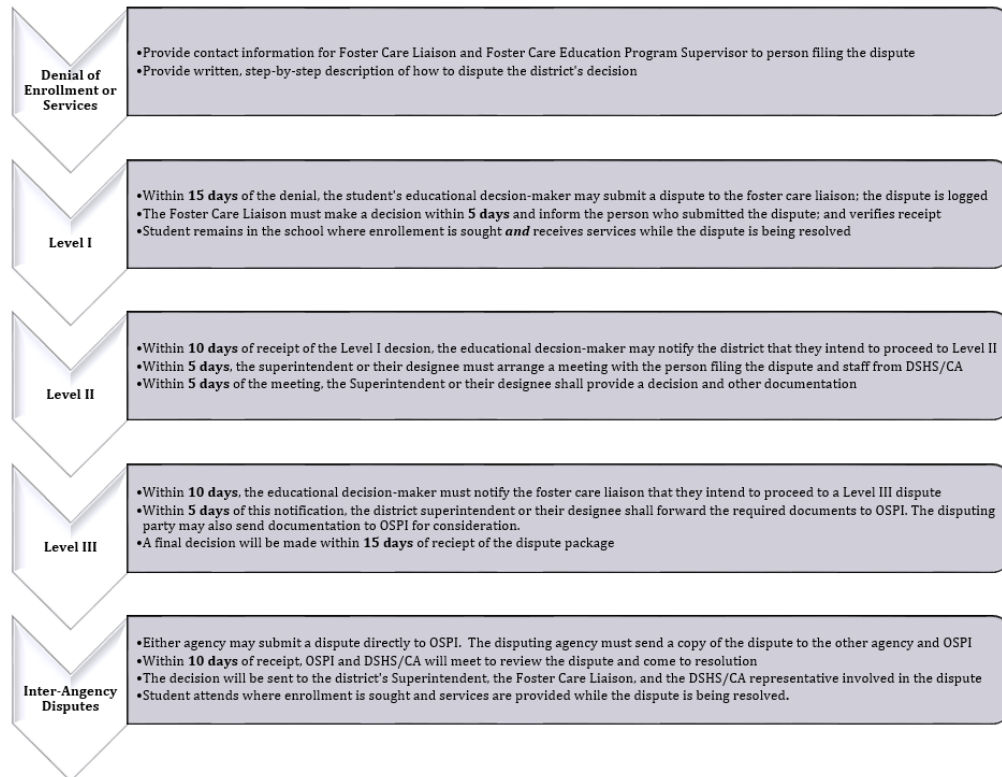


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# Dispute Process



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## Foster Care Education Program: Dispute Resolution Process

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: Foster Care Education Program

### DEFINITIONS

**Caregiver:** In Washington state, the term "caregiver" applies to potential out-of-home placement options that include: licensed foster homes, relatives, group care providers, or court ordered suitable others. *Please note: these placement options must be the result of a state dependency action as established by the court for this dispute process to apply.*

**DSHS/CA:** Department of Social and Health Services/Children's Administration is the public child welfare agency for the state of Washington.

**Educational Decision-Maker:** The *Caregiver Authorization form* always lists the caregiver and social worker as day to day decision makers for children and youth in foster care. There may, however, be additional decision-makers appointed by the court and identified on the *Health and Education Authorization Court Order* if it is someone other than, or in addition to, the caregiver and case worker. This could be the birth parent, education liaison, or another appropriate adult.

**Foster Care:** Twenty-four hours per day temporary, substitute care for the child placed away from the child's parents or guardians, and for whom DSHS or a licensed or certified child placing agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes any out-of-home care (including a relative or suitable person), so long as the child is under the placement and care responsibility of DSHS, and placed in out-of-home care by DSHS.

**Other Supervising Agency:** means an agency licensed by the state under RCW 74.15.090, or licensed by a federally recognized Indian tribe located in this state under RCW 74.15.190, that has entered into a performance-based contract with the department to provide case management for the delivery and documentation of child welfare services as defined in RCW 74.13.020.

**School of Origin:** The 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 is enrolled at the time of the placement change.

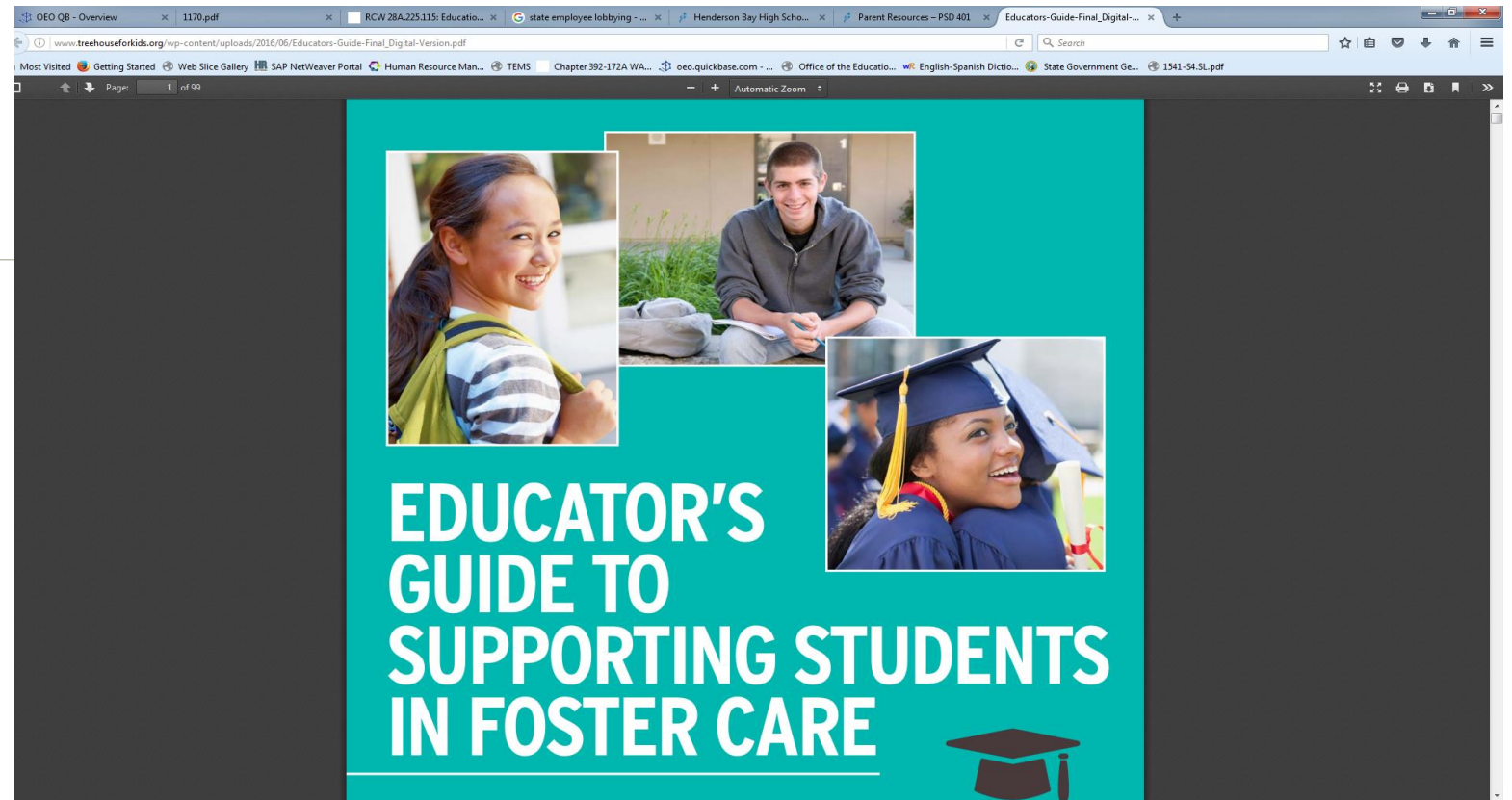
**Best Interest Decision Making:** Using child-centered criteria for determining which educational setting is best for a particular child or youth. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. The cost of transportation should not be considered.

July 2016

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# Resources



[http://www.treehouseforkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Educators-Guide-Final\\_Digital-Version.pdf](http://www.treehouseforkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Educators-Guide-Final_Digital-Version.pdf)



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# Questions?

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