

Best Interest Determination Meetings

4/26/2023





Good morning!

Please make sure your name and school district are displaying on your picture frame.

You can put questions in the chat and we will get to them!

Tribal Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous people who have stewarded this land since time immemorial and who still inhabit the area today. OSPI inhabits the area that was once the land of the Squaxin Island Tribe.



Today's Agenda

Poll
Legal Review
Review of Toolkit
Problem Solving
Resources





Take
the
poll!



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

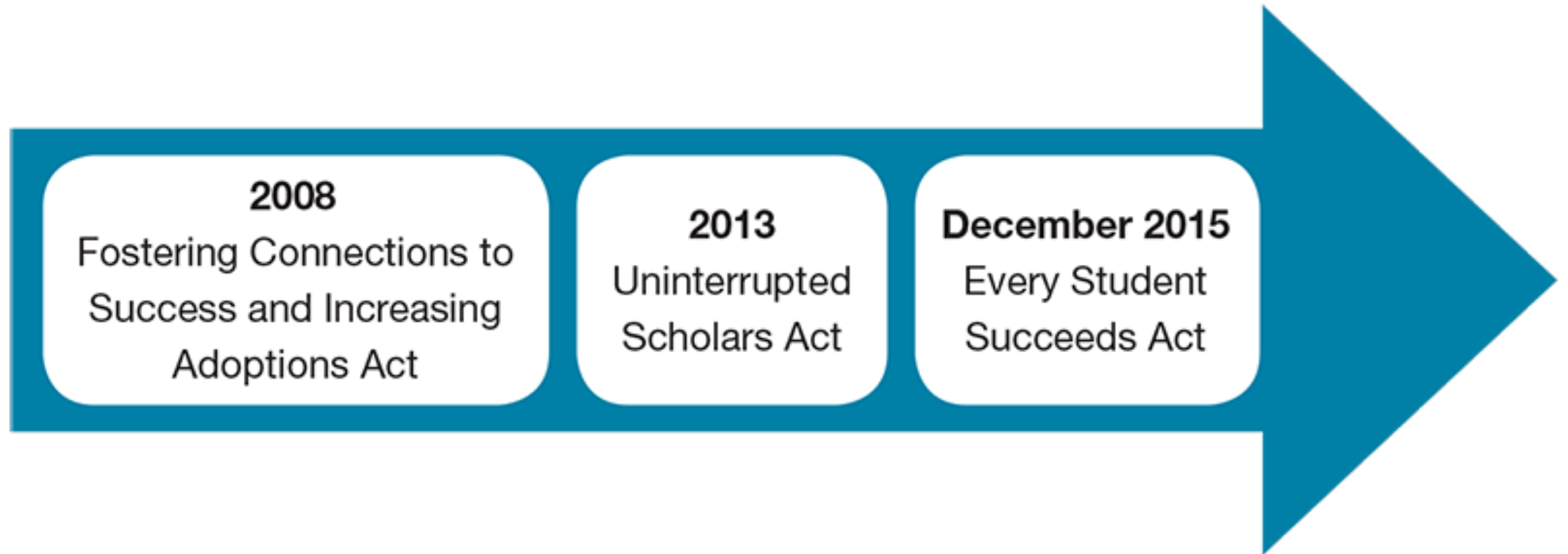


Review of the Legal Provisions



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Legislative Milestones for Educational Stability of Students in Foster Care



Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act - 2008

Fostering Connections Act requires providing **educational stability**

- State agencies are required to **consider school issues** (proximity to child's current school, fit with educational setting, etc.) when making **placement decisions**. Officials must keep children in their current school if it is in their **best interests**. States can now claim partial federal reimbursement for the cost of **transporting** children to their original school.
- If a child has to change schools, the state must ensure **immediate enrollment** in a new school and **transfer of the child's records**. Unless medically incapable, every school-aged child receiving federal foster care, guardianship, or adoption payments **must be enrolled full time** in an elementary or secondary school **or have completed secondary school**.



Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – 2015 Codified into WA State Law RCW 74.13.550

Students remain in school of origin unless there is a determination that it is NOT in their best interest.



School of Origin

School in which child is enrolled at time of placement change

Child must remain in school of origin until a determination is made

Includes LEA preschool and designated feeder schools



Best Interest Determinations - *When Should You Have One?*

- If a student is placed into dependency (i.e. foster care) and/or has a change in home placement that could warrant a possible school change, you should have a Best Interest Determination.
- Best interest determination meetings **should be made as quickly as possible** in order to prevent educational discontinuity for the student.



Best Interest Determinations

- Every effort should be made to **gather meaningful input** from relevant and appropriate persons
- Student-centered factors must be used to determine what is in a student's best interest
 - *Age*
 - *Length of placement*
 - *Special needs*
 - *Timing in school year*
 - *Grade level*
 - *Existing connection*
- **The student must remain in his or her school of origin** while a best interest determination is made



Why Does School Matter?

- With every school change students lose between **4-6 months** of academic progress.
- A positive, stable school experience provides structure and nurtures an environment where students can learn and grow.
- With fewer school disruptions, youth:
 - are provided with a familiar setting for learning
 - remain connected to school peers and supports
 - are more likely to access appropriate coursework and remain on a path to achieve college and career readiness
 - have educators and school staff who know their strengths and where they may need a little extra help

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Students in foster care are entitled to **immediate enrollment**, even without documents normally required.



Immediate Enrollment



Immediate enrollment means that a child should be enrolled in, and attending, a new school as soon as possible.

- Appropriate classroom placement
- Transportation, if required

Enrollment must not be denied or delayed because documents normally required for enrollment have not been provided

- Including Medical Records such as immunization or medical conditions

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - 2015

Schools/OSPI must collaborate with Child Welfare Agencies.





Transportation



- When a BID meeting indicates that it is in a student in foster care's best interest to remain at his/her SOO, the student is entitled to transportation to the SOO.
- A student in foster care is entitled to transportation to his/her SOO for the duration of his/her time in foster care
- If it is determined at the BID meeting that a student should be transported, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will cover 50% of all excess costs related to transporting students in foster care to and from home and school. This means that districts can split costs with DCYF.
- You can access the transportation forms and watch a tutorial on the OSPI website [here](#).

Questions? Email DCYF Education Program Administrator, Peggy Carlson, at peggy.carlson@dcyf.wa.gov or call 360-791-4912.



Health Records



Federal law (ESSA) requires immediate enrollment for students in foster care:

- even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment (including immunization records)
- even without documents normally required, including health plans and/or documentation of life-threatening conditions or even meds

Questions? Email Annie Heltz, School Health Services Consultant at OSPI, annie.hetzel@k12.wa.us

Data Sharing for Student Support

Child welfare agencies need access to school records.

Caretakers/parents need access to school records.

Schools need to know which students are in foster care and have living placement changes.

Schools must exchange education records when a student in foster care changes schools.



Problem Solving



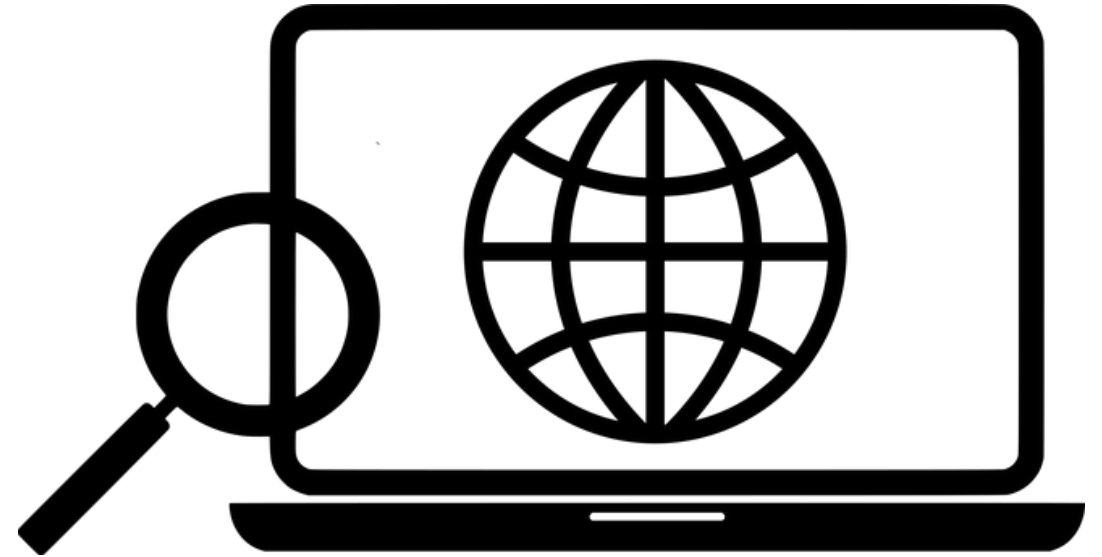
Who can help?

- Foster Care Liaisons (in your or other district)
- Building Point of Contact
- District Administration
- Transportation Department
- DCYF Case Worker
- DCYF Regional Education Lead
- DCYF Education Program Administrator – Peggy Carlson
- OSPI - Stacey and Savanna

Website

[OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)

Foster Care Office Hours
Liaisons & DCYF Contacts
State and Federal Requirements
Resources and Training –
including the BID Toolkit



Treehouse Programs



treehouse™
giving foster kids a childhood and a future

- › **Educational Advocacy**
Educational Advocates work statewide with schools, social workers, caregivers and youth of all ages to remove barriers to school success.
- › **Graduation Success**
Education Specialists work with middle and high school youth to provide education planning, monitoring, coaching and support to keep them on track to graduate with a plan for their future.
- › **Just-in-Time Funding**
Treehouse helps pay for extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, music, dance and school and summer activities.
- › **Treehouse Store**
King County youth in foster care can shop at Treehouse's free store for new and like-new clothing, school supplies, books, toys and other essentials.
- › **Launch Success**
Alumni of our Graduation Success program receive continued support up until they achieve stable housing, a degree or credential, and a living wage.
- › **Driver's Assistance**
Treehouse removes many transportation-related financial burdens for youth in foster care, including the cost of auto insurance and driver's education.
- › **Holiday Magic**
Each year, we provide more than 5,000 wrapped gifts for children and youth in foster care throughout Washington state.



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Treehouseforkids.org



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Did you have an
“A Ha” moment?

Is there
something we
missed?

Put it in the chat!



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