

The Founders Academy
EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

It is the Board's intent to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention in school of children who are in foster care. All staff shall take reasonable steps to ensure that children in foster care are not segregated or stigmatized and that educational decisions are made in the best interests of those students.

A. Definition.

Under guidance issued jointly by NHDOE and the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services, and for the purposes of this Policy, “foster care” shall mean “24 hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes children in foster family home, shelters, relative foster homes, group homes and residential facilities, regardless of whether the foster care facility is licensed or whether payments are made by the state.” To the extent required under applicable law, a child in foster care under this policy also includes children whom an appropriate child welfare agency indicates are awaiting a foster care placement. (Note: children awaiting foster care may also qualify as homeless)

The Charter School shall coordinate with other Charter Schools/Districts and with local child welfare agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to students in foster care as needed.

The Dean or designee is responsible for providing any required assurances to applicable state and federal agencies that the Charter School is complying with applicable requirement related to ensuring the educational stability of children in Foster care; and for reasonably monitoring compliance with such assurances.

B. Charter School Point of Contact with Child Welfare Agencies.

The Dean or designee shall designate a staff member to serve as the Charter School's point of contact (the “Foster Care POC”) between the New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth and Families (“DCYF”), NHDOE, other Charter Schools/Districts, and other child welfare agencies. The main duty of the Foster Care POC is to facilitate the prompt and appropriate placement, transfer, and enrollment of students in foster care, pursuant to applicable state and federal statutes regulations and guidance. Additionally, the Foster Care POC shall work with the Dean or designee to monitor regulations and guidance related to this policy that may be issued by applicable state and federal agencies (e.g., DCYF, NHDOE, and the U.S. Department of Education). The Charter School shall provide training opportunities and other technical assistance to the Foster Care POC and other appropriate Charter School staff regarding the Charter School's obligations to students in

foster care.

C. Best Interest Enrollment Determinations, Disputes and Enrollment.

Generally, a student in foster care will remain in his/her school of origin, unless there is a determination that it is not in the student's best interest. The Foster Care POC shall assist DCYF or any other child welfare agency to make a "best interest determination" education decision, particularly the determination of whether or not it is in the best interest of the student in foster care to remain in his/her school of origin or to enroll in a new school. Unless local procedures are established in accordance with state and federal law, the Charter School will use the model procedures prepared jointly by the NHDOE and DCYF.

If the determination is that the best interests of a child is not to remain in the school of origin, and instead placed within a new school within the district, the child in foster care shall be immediately enrolled in the new school ("receiving school"), even if any documents or records otherwise required for enrollment are not immediately available.

If there are disputes regarding a determination regarding the best interest determination for a child in foster care, it is expected that DCYF and the separate school Charter Schools/Districts, both sending and receiving, will work collaboratively at the local level to resolve the issue. Should there be no resolution, RSA 193.12, V-b, requires the Department of Health and Human Services to request in writing that the two Superintendents involved resolve the dispute. If the residency dispute remains unresolved after 10 days after such request, the Department of Health and Human Services shall request that the Commissioner of the Department of Education determines the residence of the child for purposes of school enrollment.

If a school within the district is a receiving school, such receiving school shall accept the student's certified coursework as if it had been completed at the receiving school. To the extent such coursework is not aligned with the curriculum, the awarded credit may be elective, but it must be counted toward required credits for advancement or graduation.

D. Transportation.

When the Charter School is notified that a student in foster care needs, or may need, transportation to a Charter School school, the Foster Care POC will take steps to establish an individualized plan that addresses transportation to maintain the student in his/her school of origin will be arranged, provided and funded for the duration of time that the student in foster care is attending his/her school of origin.

In establishing such a plan, the Foster Care POC and other Charter School staff shall follow any existing transportation procedures, systems-level plan or agreement that the Charter School, acting in collaboration with DCYF and/or other departments of human services, has adopted or otherwise expressly agreed to implement for the cost-effective transportation of the

student.

If there are disputes regarding the provision or funding of transportation, the School District/ Charter School foster care point of contact and child welfare agency representatives will contact their respective Supervisor and Superintendent of the school to resolve the dispute. to the extent feasible and appropriate, the Charter Schools involved should ensure that a child remains in his or her school of origin while the disputes are being resolved to minimize disruptions and reduce school transitions.

All staff shall take reasonable steps to ensure that homeless students are not segregated or stigmatized, their homeless status is not revealed or alluded to in the presence of other students,
and that educational decisions are made in the best interests of those students.

Adopted: September 21, 2022