

Dear Superintendent,

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), contains key protections to promote educational stability and success for students in foster care. ESSA requires state and local education agencies to collaborate with child welfare partners in an effort to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care. Local child welfare agencies may have already been in contact regarding these new requirements.

While most of the ESSA state plan will be implemented beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, the foster care provisions must be implemented by December 10, 2016. In an effort to ensure that youth in foster care have adequate representation and access to academic and non-academic resources, ESSA requires each school district to designate a foster care point of contact.

A district foster care point of contact must be designated by **November 10, 2016** by entering the name and contact information into the [Ohio Education Directory System](#).

The general role of the local foster care point of contact is to facilitate district implementation and compliance with state and federal laws as they relate to students in foster care, and to collaborate with the local county child welfare agency to address educational barriers that prevent students in foster care from being identified, enrolled, attending, or succeeding in school. Some of the roles and responsibilities may include:

- Coordinating with the corresponding child welfare agency point of contact on the implementation of ESSA foster care provisions.
- Coordinating with the state foster care point of contact.
- Attending training and professional development opportunities to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care.
- Serving as the primary point of contact person for county child welfare workers.
- Leading and documenting the development process for making best interest determinations.
- Facilitating immediate enrollment and transfer of records.
- Facilitating data sharing with child welfare agencies, consistent with FERPA.
- Developing and coordinating local transportation procedures for students in foster care.
- Managing best interest and transportation cost disputes.
- Ensuring youth in foster care are regularly attending school.
- Providing professional development and training to school staff on the education needs of youth in foster care.

The foster care point of contact role is complex and requires ongoing collaboration with county child welfare agencies, it is important to designate a staff member who understands ESSA and is familiar with issues associated with service youth in foster care. The Ohio Department of Education will be sharing information with districts through the local points of contact and they will be a critical partner while planning implementation. If your district has not already been contacted by the local child welfare agency and provided with a point of contact, please view the contact information for child welfare agencies by county. For more detailed information regarding the requirements, please read the [joint guidance from the United States Department of Health and Human Service and the United State Department of Education](#).

The Ohio Department of Education will be communicating more detailed guidance. In the meantime, please connect with the contact in your county listed in the attached contact list to begin collaboration and planning. Also, please visit our [foster care webpage](#) to learn more about educational stability for students in foster care. If you have questions, please email at fostercare@education.ohio.gov.