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|  | <b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES</b><br><b>CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>        |                    |
|                                                                                   | <b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Services<br><b>Section 20:</b> Educational Services |                    |
|                                                                                   | <b>Effective Date:</b> January 1, 2026                                            | <b>Version:</b> 15 |

## POLICY OVERVIEW

Children do better in school when their safety, stability, well-being and permanency is part of their educational plan. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) makes sure children in foster care get the school help they need as part of their Case Plan/Prevention Plan.

## POLICY STATEMENT

To see how the child's education needs are being met, DCS will gather education records and mental health records that directly affect the child's education. DCS will review and discuss these records at the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting or a Case Plan Conference.

DCS will invite the child's school to provide information and/or participate in the case planning process. DCS will also make sure a member of the Education Services team is present, when appropriate, to help decide if an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan (504 Plan) may be helpful to the child and their school performance. The CFT will then develop a plan to ensure the child's educational needs are met.

DCS will make sure every school-aged child in out-of-home care is enrolled in school full-time, unless one (1) of the following situations exists:

1. The youth is eligible for, and pursuing, a High School Equivalency (HSE) Diploma;

**Note:** Some scholarships and grants will not be available if an HSE Diploma is completed instead of obtaining a high school diploma.

2. An alternate education plan has been suggested by the school the child attended, at the time of placement, and the plan has been approved by the court;
3. The youth has graduated from high school or has completed an HSE Diploma; or
4. A doctor says the child has a health condition that keeps them from attending school.

In accordance with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), DCS, schools, and the Indiana Department of Education work together to help children in out-of-home care do well in school. Each agency chooses special people called State and Local Points of Contact (POC) to help make the best educational decisions for the child. DCS has appointed the Education Services Program Director as the agency's State ESSA POC and the DCS Education Services Team as the agency's Local ESSA POCs. Additionally, in the best interest of a child, arrangements should be made to keep the child at their current school of origin when possible.

DCS will not approve a child in out-of-home care to enroll in a private educational program, unless an exception is approved by DCS and the court.

DCS will **not** pay for the costs related to attendance at a private school unless it is included in services provided by a residential treatment facility through an Individual Child Placement Referral (ICPR). DCS will **only** pay educational fees associated with the **repair or replacement of textbooks, devices, or musical instruments..**

**Note:** If offered by the school, resource parents are required to purchase insurance for any school-issued devices. DCS will reimburse resource parents for the cost of the insurance and deductible.

#### LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 20-26-11: Legal Settlement and Transfer of Students; Transfer Tuition](#)
- [IC 20-50-3-3: "School of origin"](#)
- [IC 20-51-1: Definitions](#)
- [IC 20-51-4: Choice Scholarship](#)
- [IC 21-12-6-5.5: Identification and notification of eligible students](#)
- [IC 21-12-6-6.7: FAFSA online form; information](#)
- [IC 31-34-3-4.7: Notice to the child's school](#)
- [IC 31-34-15-4\(8\)\(c\): Form; contents](#)
- [IC 31-34-20-5: Determination and reporting of legal settlement of child](#)
- [IC 31-34-21-10: Review of child's legal settlement](#)