

School Is Starting! Are You Prepared?



Educational Rights, Responsibilities and Requirements
for Students in Foster Care



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Center for Child Welfare and Education

Educational Access Project for DCFS

What We Will Learn Today

> How to get the school year off to a good start

> Strategies to overcome enrollment issues

> Educational Procedures 314 - What to do and when

> Where to go for help and resources

A Good Start- Understand the Child

- Understand the child and your role in preparation
- Children in DCFS's care and custody have all experienced childhood trauma
- Complex trauma can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems in children and adolescents
- This increases the risk of cognitive impairment and stress related challenges

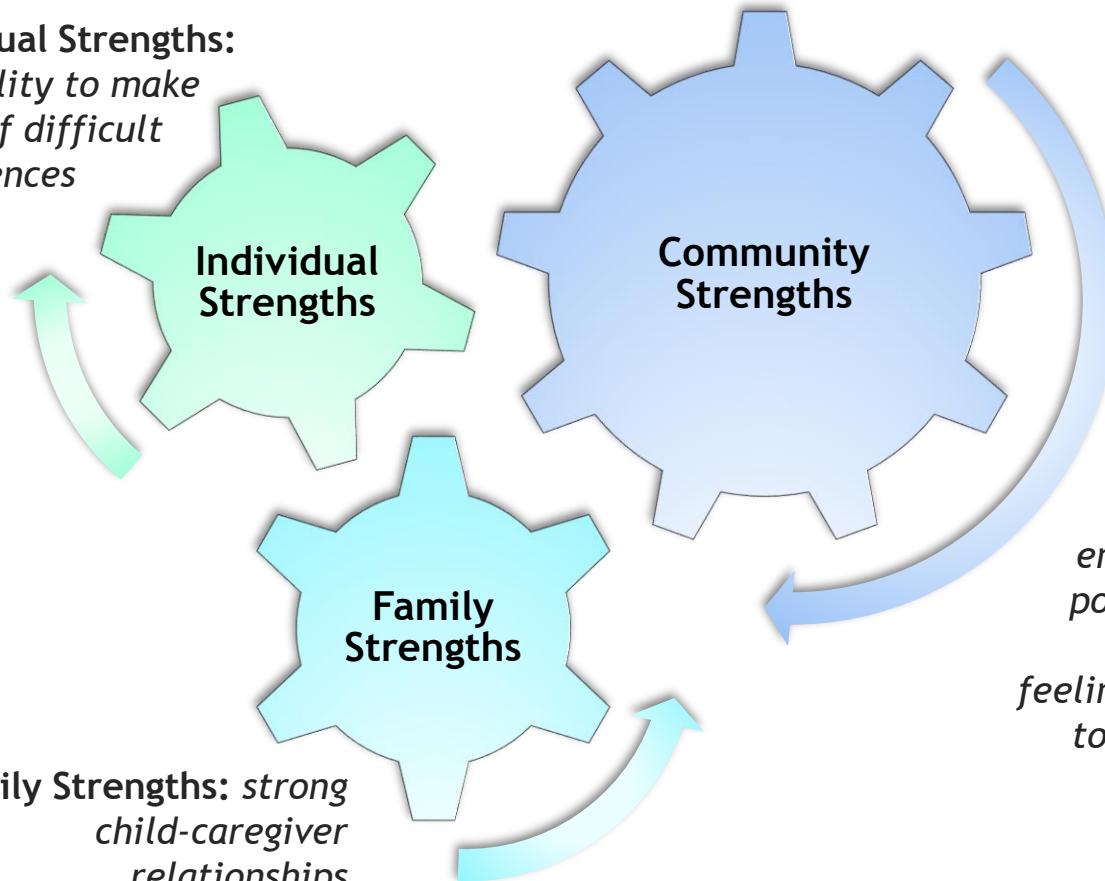


The Good News

- Risk factors are not predictive because of protective factors
- Some children who have experienced trauma are not traumatized
- Protective factors promote resiliency. They include:
 - Individual Strengths
 - Family Strengths
 - Community Strengths

Cultivating Protective Factors

Individual Strengths:
the ability to make sense of difficult experiences



Community Strengths:
nurturing environments, positive school climate and feeling connected to their school

Family Strengths: *strong child-caregiver relationships*

Practical Tips - Preparing for Schools

- Expose the child to a new school environment before school starts
- Review social activities, academic challenges and coping skills
 - Friendships: making new friends, seeing old friends, etc.
 - Setting Goals: the new year gives an opportunity for fresh start, what are your academic and extracurricular goals this year?
 - Dealing with Difficulty: What do you do when you don't understand something? What do you do when you come across children who are not so nice?
- Encourage students to talk with an adult when they face problems
- Ensure them that they have your support

School Supports for Child

- Find out what supports are available at school or in district to help students address their needs
- Find out about extracurricular activities of interest to the student
- Meet with teacher soon after the start of the school year (share and understand needs and priorities, establish plans for communication, etc.)





- What problems have you encountered trying to enroll children in school?

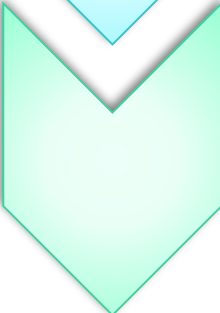
Enrollment



Enrollment - DCFS Procedures 314

- 
- **ALL** children 3-5 must be enrolled in a pre-school program

- 
- **ALL** children from ages 5 through high school graduation must attend school

- 
- Caregiver and/or caseworker will enroll; caseworker ultimately responsible

The Right to Attend School



Students may attend school until age 21 (until the day before their 22nd birthday for special education) or until they graduate



Students who drop out of school must be re-enrolled unless over age 19 and cannot meet credit requirements by age 21

School Enrollment

Public Schools

- DCFS requires children in foster care to be enrolled in public school.

Private/ Religious/ Parochial School

- Foster parent responsible for tuition
- No reimbursement for private school
- Document Bio-parent's consent for religious instruction on CFS 589

Home Schooling

- Requires submission of application and approval of the DCFS Guardian
- Foster parent must meet strict curriculum guidelines and responsible for any costs

Enrollment Timelines

Within 2 Days

- Caregiver must enroll child with caseworker support

By the 3rd Day

- If enrollment is not forthcoming in 2 days, caseworker must intervene to ensure enrollment within no more than 5 days

More Than 5 Days

- Contact education advisor for assistance

Documents Needed for Enrollment

1. Placement form (DCFS 906)
2. Birth certificate
3. ISBE student transfer form
4. Proof of vaccinations, physical, dental, and eye exams
5. Copy of medical card
6. Copy of child's school records and IEP/IFSP if applicable

Enrollment Documents Timeline

Document	Immediately Upon Enrollment	As Soon as Possible	By October 15 of the New School Year	Within 30 Days of Enrollment
Placement Form (DCFS 906)	X			
Birth Certificate				X
ISBE Transfer Form		X		
Proof of Medical Exams & Vaccinations			X	X
Copy of Medical Card		X		
IEP / IFSP / School Records		X		

Residency - Regular Education

As long as pupil is not living with adult solely for access to educational programs:

- Pupil lives with natural or adoptive parent
- Court granted custody to adult with whom the pupil lives
- Court granted guardianship to adult with whom pupil lives
- Pupil lives with adult receiving Public Aid for that pupil
- Pupil lives with adult who has accepted responsibility and provides a fixed night time abode

Residency: Special Education, Homeless, Immigrant

Residency for special education students is generally based on guardianship

Resident district for a homeless student is the district in which pupil enrolls

Residence in the school district entitles immigrant children, including foreign exchange students, to attend tuition free

Establishing Child Identity

- Certified Copy of Birth Certificate is required within 30 days of enrollment due to Missing Children Records Act
- If a certified copy can't be obtained:
 - Provide alternate identification
 - Provide a signed & notarized affidavit/letter explaining the inability to produce a copy of the birth certificate
 - Acceptable Forms of Alternate ID:
 - a passport or visa
 - other governmental documentation of the child's identity.

ISBE Student Transfer Form


ISBE 33-78 contains the information about whether or not the student is in “good standing”

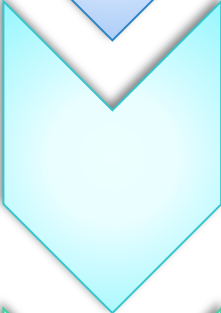
- ❑ If presented for enrollment without an ISBE Student Transfer form, receiving district must immediately take steps to obtain the “good standing” document from previous school
- ❑ If student has already been found eligible for special education and related services, the district may be required to enroll the student regardless of the student's proof of “good standing”

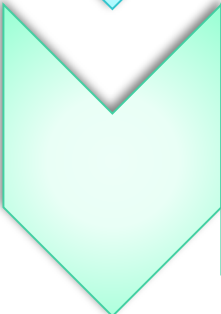
Vaccination Requirements

- Required up-to-date immunizations for a child entering any grade include: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles & 2 doses of rubella and mumps.
- Haemophilus Influenzae Type B (Hib) is required only for children entering preschool programming.
- Hepatitis B is required for children entering preschool programming, but is not required for children in kindergarten through fourth grades. **Hepatitis B is, however, required for students entering sixth grade and above**
- Varicella (chicken pox) is required for students entering preschool programming through 10th grade (2 doses)
- Tdap vaccine required prior to starting 6th and 9th grades

Health, Dental and Eye Exams

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- Health Exams must be provided:
 - Prior to entering Kindergarten or First Grade, and Fifth or Ninth Grades

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- Dental Exams must be provided:
 - To all children in Kindergarten, Second and Sixth Grades by May 15th of the year

- 
- Eye Exams must be provided:
 - Prior to FIRST ENTRY into Kindergarten or any grade beyond Kindergarten by Oct 15th of the year
 - Waivers are available for hardship reasons

At Enrollment

Obtain Student Handbook that explains conduct, attendance and graduation requirements:

- Discipline Policy
- Fee Policy
- School Contact Information
- School Calendar

Provide caregiver, caseworker, education liaison and supervisor contact information

School Fee Waivers for Children in the Free School Lunch Program

All wards are eligible for the School Lunch Program and are eligible for a waiver of fees for textbooks and instructional materials:

- Ensure enrollment in School Lunch Program
- Obtain copy of School Fee Policies to determine other fee waivers
- DCFS will pay only for fees not waived by school policies

School Supplies

DCFS provides \$50 per school year for school supplies, which include:

- Crayons
- Class notebooks
- Glue
- Other, as needed
- Paper
- Pens/Pencils/Erasers
- Calculators
- Rulers

POS agencies have their own payment policies.

School Expenses

School clothes and/or uniforms are covered by the monthly foster care payment

Transportation is free for students living more than 1½ miles from school or 1 mile from public transportation, experiencing hazardous traffic conditions or receiving special education services and needing transportation

DCFS will pay for tutoring after all other options are exhausted (with written recommendation of teacher)

Denial of Enrollment for Academic Failure

A school district may deny enrollment to students aged 17 or older for one semester when ALL 5 conditions are met:

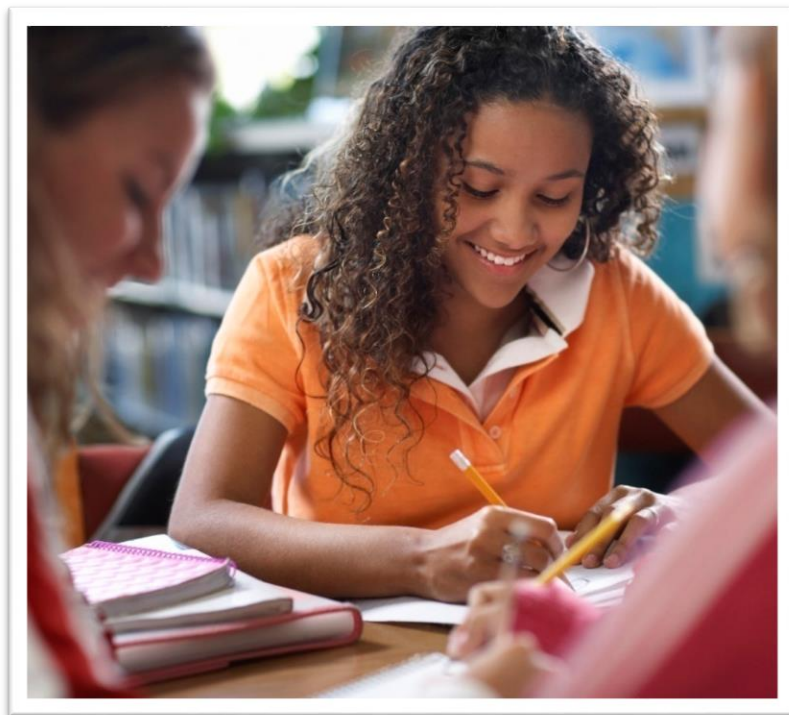
- Grade point of less than “D” prior semester (< 1.0 GPA)
- Grade point of less than “D” current semester
- Written warning provided student & guardian
- Notice of right to appeal provided student or guardian
- Student is provided with academic improvement plan & academic remediation services

Denial of Enrollment for Truancy

A school district may deny enrollment to students aged 17 or older for one semester when ALL 5 conditions are met:

- Unexcused absence for 20% prior semester (18 Days)
- Unexcused absence for 20% current semester (18 Days)
- Written warning provided student & guardian
- Notice of right to appeal provided student or guardian
- Student is provided with remediation services: assessment, counseling and support services

DCFS Educational Procedures 314



Foster Parent Responsibilities:

Enrollment

- Ensure children are enrolled in school from age 5 to 21 or until they graduate
- Locate and enroll in an early childhood education program for children under 5 years of age
- Support students transitioning between schools

Foster Parent Responsibilities: Supporting Achievement

- Assist with homework
- Monitor academic progress
- Attend parent/teacher conferences
- Encourage/support participation in extracurricular activities
- Attend truancy hearings
- Attend Educational Advocacy Trainings

Foster Parent Responsibilities: Special Education

Represent child for the purpose of special education or early intervention services:

- Attend and participate in IEP/IFSP meetings
- Provide consent for special education services and placement
- Serve as surrogate parent when a child is placed residentially with a goal of returning to the foster home

Confidentiality

May share information which relates directly to a child's educational needs, including:

- Academic performance
- Strengths, interests, abilities
- Regular school attendance
- Development of meaningful school friendships
- Control of child's behavior
- Safety of the child and others
- Addressing childhood trauma
- Other information needed for child to receive an appropriate education

Attendance Guidelines

Student may be absent only for a debilitating injury, illness or contagious disease
(local school policies dictate excusable absences)

Student may miss school to attend necessary court or ACR meetings



- Caregiver must report absences to school
- Arrange for homework during extended absences

Attendance Guidelines, Cont'd.

- Caseworker shall review compulsory attendance laws with caregiver and track attendance/truancy
- Children may not be held out for:
 - Discipline
 - Change of placement
 - Caregiver nor caseworker convenience
- Sibling and parental visitation should occur outside of school hours (exceptions must be noted on CFS 492, Case Entry Form)

Visitation/School Conduct

- Child cannot be deprived of contact with family members as a means of punishment for behavior at school.
- Caseworker shall assist the caregiver in exploring other disciplinary options.

Suspensions

- Caregiver will contact caseworker on the day of suspension notification
- Caseworker will record suspension on CFS 119, Unusual Incident Reporting Form (UIR)
- Caseworker and caregiver will work with the student and school to address the suspension

Expulsion

- Caregiver will receive certified letter from the school and shall immediately inform caseworker
- Caseworker will notify DCFS Guardian, obtain legal representation, and notify Education Advisor
- If expulsion upheld, caseworker shall:
 - Record on UIR
 - Prepare plan of action in conjunction with Education Advisor

School Placement & Changes



If Change in Living Arrangement Occurs

Children in the care of DCFS have the right to remain in the same school. In order to do so, the caseworker must provide the school district with the following:

1. Proof of guardianship
2. Letter stating that it is in the best interest of the child to remain in current school
3. Name/address of foster parent or residential facility

Arranging for Transportation

Caseworker will request that the school district provide transportation to remain at the current school. If the district refuses the caseworker will:

- Assist caregiver to acquire transportation
- Explore options for funding, including DCFS reimbursement, if necessary
- Document in education plan the decision to keep the child in the current school and who will be responsible for transportation arrangements and costs

When Changing Schools

Caseworker will work with the caregiver and school to ensure a successful transition:

- Provide opportunity to say good-bye
- Ensure the child's records are transferred
- For high school students, ensure the Annual High School Academic Plan is presented to and reviewed with the caregiver

Consent for School Activities



Who Signs for What?

Caregivers:

Caregivers are authorized to consent for general school related activities including:

- Field trips within Illinois
- Routine social events (school parties, etc.)
- School enrollment
- Attendance at sporting or cultural events
- Extra curricular activities (except athletic participation)

Who Signs for What?

Caregivers Cont.

Foster parents (surrogate parent for children in residential placements or DOC) provide consent for special education:

- Special education evaluations and reevaluations
- IEP or IFSP services
- Release of educational records
- Educational placements
- Due process hearings and mediations

Who Signs for What? Guardian:

Athletic participation

Media coverage / events

Slide show productions

Photographs

Voice reproductions

Research projects

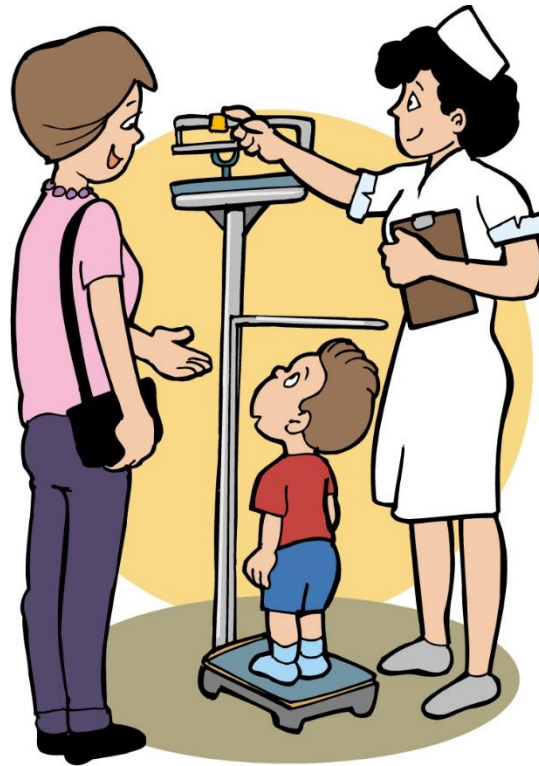
Field trips outside Illinois

Liability releases

Medical exams or care

Physical restraints

Protection and Medical Management Plans



School Protection Plans

- May be needed for children who:
 - exhibit sexually or physically aggressive behavior
 - pose a flight risk
 - are victims of bullying or sexual harassment
- Plans must be developed in conjunction with school personnel

School Medical Management Plans

For the self-administration of medication, DCFS must:

- Provide written authorization
- Provide written physician's statement, containing:
 1. Name & purpose of medication
 2. Prescribed dosage
 3. Times & circumstances under which it is to be administered



Vocation and Career Planning



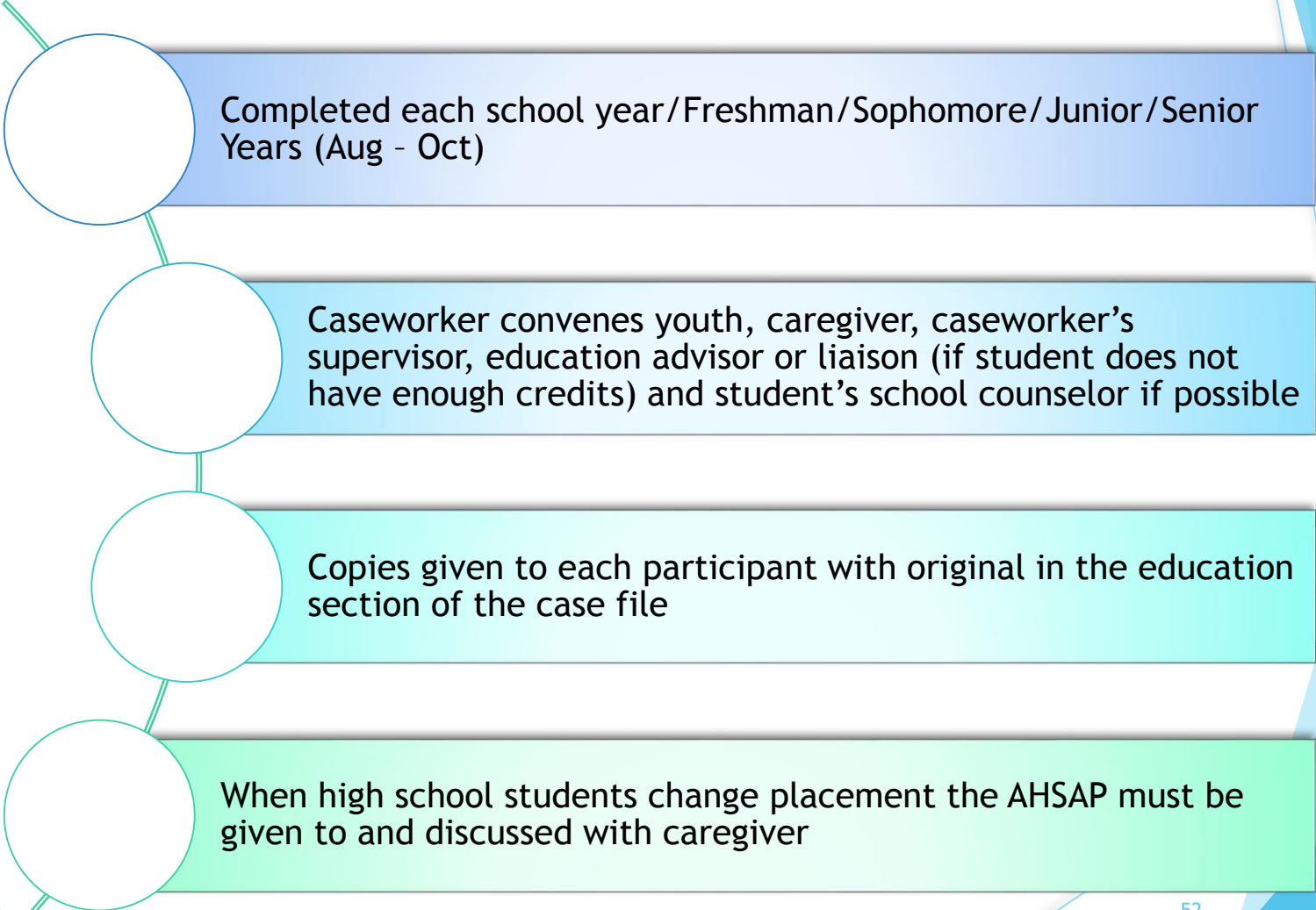
Expanded Vocational and Career Planning

To ensure the DCFS youth are prepared for post-secondary school, employment or continuing education

Caseworkers are responsible for completing the Annual High School Academic Plan (CFS 407 HS)

Plan is to support academic achievement and encourage post-secondary planning

Annual Academic High School Plan Meeting



Completed each school year/Freshman/Sophomore/Junior/Senior Years (Aug - Oct)

Caseworker convenes youth, caregiver, caseworker's supervisor, education advisor or liaison (if student does not have enough credits) and student's school counselor if possible

Copies given to each participant with original in the education section of the case file

When high school students change placement the AHSAP must be given to and discussed with caregiver

GED

- High school diploma preferred
- GED can only be pursued if:
 - Youth ineligible for public school's general or alternative program due to **expulsion OR youth is over age 19 and unable to graduate by 21**
 - GED program must be ISBE approved/certified

Home Schooling



Home Schooling

- DCFS Guardian determines approval and grants permission for home schooling
- Criteria to be used for consideration is outlined on page 17 of Procedures 314
- If approved:
 - Foster parent must register with local district
 - DCFS Education Advisor must periodically visit and review program
 - Foster parent must submit quarterly documentation of academic and behavioral achievement

Tutoring



Tutoring

Supplementary service provided for students having difficulty maintaining satisfactory academic progress

School districts are not mandated to provide tutoring

If free tutoring is unavailable, purchase upon written recommendation of the child's teacher

Possible Situations Requiring Tutoring

- Needs remedial help after entering DCFS or changing schools
- Currently has one or more failing grades and/or grades are dropping
- Recommended on DCFS Education Report Form (CFS 407)
- Has been retained for one or more years
- Compensation for extended absence from school

Early Childhood Education



Early Childhood Education

- All children ages birth to 5 shall be enrolled in an early childhood education program
- Public programs must be accessed first based on availability/eligibility:
 - Head Start
 - Pre-Kindergarten At-Risk
 - Early Childhood Special Education

Head Start/Early Head Start

A comprehensive child and family development program for children ages birth to 5

- Wards are automatically eligible
- No cost to families
- Typically year-round programs
- Waiting lists may occur

Pre-K for At Risk

Designed for children at risk of school failure based on criteria set by each school district

- Wards are eligible
- No cost to families
- Operated by some, not all school districts
- Typically available only during the academic year

Accredited Child Care Programs

Only to be used when no Head Start or Pre-K At Risk program is available and the child is not eligible for Early Intervention or Early Childhood Special Education

Accrediting agencies:

- NAEYC - National Association for the Education of Young Children
- NACCP - National Association of Child Care Professionals

Early Intervention Program

- Developmental services for infants and toddlers ages birth to 3 with any of the following conditions:
 - Developmental delay of 30% in one or more areas of development
 - Diagnosed physical or mental conditions that typically result in developmental delays
 - Presence of risk factors that suggest a delay of 30% may occur if services are not provided
- Referrals are made to Child & Family Connections Office. **Call 1-800-323-GROW**

Early Childhood Special Education

School-based program for children aged 3-5, who meet eligibility for special education outlined in 314.60

- Caregiver and caseworker ensure referral/evaluation
- Attends IEP meetings
- Notifies caregiver of procedural safeguards
- Follows all Procedures outlined for students in special education in 314.60

DCFS Educational Forms



Enrollments and Transfers in School or Early Childhood

- CFS 407-2 - Education Records Transfer Request
 - Mail or fax within 5 days to new school and previous school
 - Previous school is to complete and forward records within 10 days
 - Make sure new school has copy of IEP if appropriate
 - School districts cannot refuse to enroll a child due to not having previous records

- Complete Education Report Form (CFS 407)

Educational and Developmental Reports

Caseworker and supervisor are responsible to review educational or developmental progress to determine the need for:

- Conference with educators
- Request for Educational Surrogate Parent
- Referral for evaluation for special education or early intervention
- Other assessments that may enhance educational/developmental performance
- Tutoring

Documentation of Educational & Developmental Services

Caseworker will document appropriate educational or developmental goals in the Service Plan (CFS 497, Part III) with information obtained from:

- CFS 407, CFS 407-2, 407-4, 407-5, 407-HS
- IFSP or IEP if appropriate
- Monitoring progress at least twice per year

Success Requires a Good Start.. And a Great Finish!



Make education a priority on an ongoing basis



Support student engagement in school and learning



Establish a collaborative environment of accountability and reasonable expectations



Ask for help when you need it to support the students

