

# Foster Connections/ESSA Guidance 201



Collaboratively Presented by



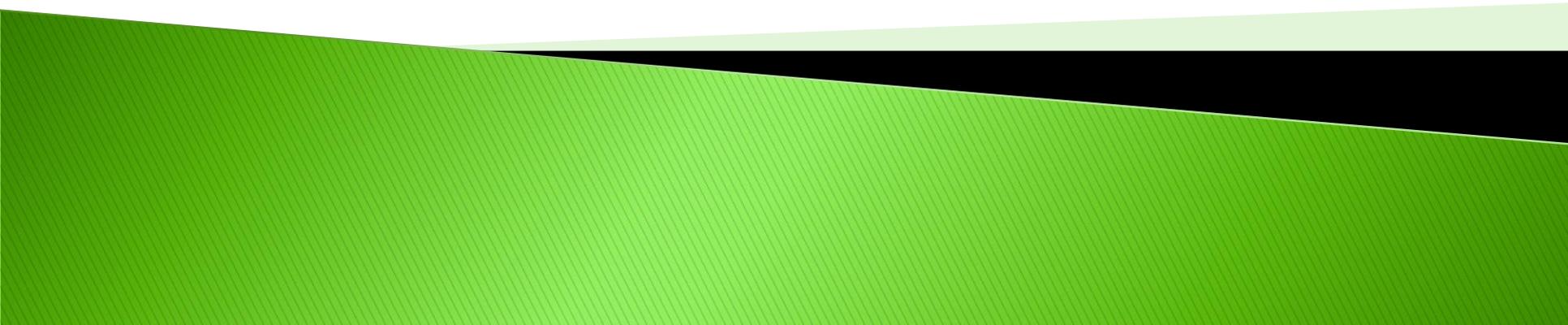
Virginia Department of Social Services  
Virginia Department of Education

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# Importance of Educational Stability

- ▶ When children change foster care placements, they often change schools, negatively impacting their education.
  - ▶ **Unscheduled school change/one year: 75% v. 40% for peers**
- ▶ One fewer placement change/year *almost twice as likely to graduate* from high school before leaving care.
- ▶ Keeping child in the same school:
  - Provides continuity in education
  - Maintains important relationships at school
  - Provides stability during traumatic time
  - Improves educational and life outcomes
- ▶ High mobility impacts non-mobile students, too.

**Fostering Connections Act  
and  
Every Student Succeeds Act**



# Fostering Connections Act of 2008

## Major Areas of Reform

- ▶ Increasing adoptions
  - ▶ Providing state option of financial assistance for relatives assuming custody of children
  - ▶ Improving services for older youth
  - ▶ Providing oversight and coordinating health services
  - ▶ Ensuring educational stability
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# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 Title I, Part A



Full implementation:  
2017–18 School Year

# ESSA

- ▶ Parallel mandate on education side
- ▶ Local Title I plans must describe collaboration with LDSS to provide transportation
- ▶ “Awaiting foster care” removed from McKinney-Vento
- ▶ \*Achievement data and on-time graduation rate for students in foster care must be posted
  - VDOE –foster care flag in student data system added 2016–17
  - Immediate enrollment or superintendent notification should trigger

# Educational Requirements Apply to All Foster Care Placements

- ▶ Requirements apply when child is in foster care (i.e., LDSS has responsibility for placement & care of child).
- ▶ Regardless how child enters foster care:
  - Court commitment (e.g., abuse, neglect)
  - Voluntary entrustment agreement when parents request LDSS assume custody of child for a temporary period or permanently.
  - Voluntary noncustodial agreement with parents for child to receive foster care services while they retain legal custody and LDSS assumes placement, care, and case management responsibility.
- ▶ Includes initial and subsequent placements of children

# Who is Covered?

»» Complete worksheet in groups

# Revised Joint Guidance Document & Forms October 2017

- ▶ VDOE/VDSS Joint Guidance for School Stability of Children and Youth In Foster Care
- ▶ Notification for BID
  - [FC/ESSA A-17](#)
- ▶ Best Interest Determination
  - [FC/ESSA Form B-17](#)
- ▶ Immediate Enrollment
  - [FC/ESSA Form C-17](#)
- ▶ *Optional*: Residential Input
  - [FC/ESSA Form D-17](#)

# Guidance from VDOE

## Superintendent's Memos (examples)

- ▶ [No. 306-10, dated December, 10, 2010](#)
  - Announced Joint guidance and required liaisons be appointed
- ▶ [No. 197-11, July 22, 2011](#)
  - Requirements regarding students with disabilities placed in FC
- ▶ [No. 272-16, dated October 28, 2016](#)
  - Title I, Part A transportation assurance
- ▶ [No. 324-17, dated December 8, 2018](#)
  - Announced revised joint guidance
  
- ▶ See VDOE Web site:
- ▶ [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student\\_family/foster\\_care\\_students/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/foster_care_students/index.shtml)

# Guidance from the Virginia Department of Social Services

- Revised Joint Guidance and updated/additional forms posted on VDSS public site (click on educational stability) – <https://dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/>
  - Posted on VDSS internal site, FUSION
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# THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS



# Liaisons

## ▶ Foster Care Liaisons

- ▶ Point person for communication with LDSS
- ▶ Download list from VDOE Web site
- ▶ \*\*Recommended: have designees for time liaison is not available\*\*

School Divisions

## ▶ Educational Stability Liaisons

- ▶ Oversight role
- ▶ Direct work/  
communication remains with the case worker
- ▶ <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/fc/index.cgi>
  - Click educational stability

Local Departments of  
Social Services

# Important First Step to Avoid Enrollment Delays

Before Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) makes a placement change\*:

The placement of child in foster care should take into account:

- The appropriateness of the student's current educational setting
- The proximity to the school in which the student is enrolled at the time of placement

\*When possible, not possible with emergency placements.

# Including School Information in LDSS Decision on Residence

- ▶ LDSS shall notify current school that child needs a new residence (foster care placement).
- ▶ School shall provide LDSS information on appropriateness of student's current school placement via:
  - Phone, email, sharing school documents
  - Participating in LDSS Family Partnership Meeting on placement decision.

# LDSS Decides Residence

LDSS determines most appropriate residence based on:

- Safety and permanency plan (paramount)
  - Appropriateness of student's current educational setting
  - Proximity (distance from potential residences) to current school
  - All other critical factors in making placement decisions
- ▶ LDSS shall notify *appropriate school division representative(s)* of the student's new residence and need to jointly determine student's best interest for school placement. [FC/ESSA A-17](#)

# The Best Interest Determination Process

Who is responsible?

- The LDSS case worker is responsible for organizing and facilitating the process.
- ❖ The “joint” educational placement decision is made between *the responsible school division* and LDSS.
- ❖ Immediate enrollment form should not be faxed to the school division without completing the BID process. (if required)

# New ESSA Step

- ▶ When foster care liaison receives notice
  - Share current school and new residence address with school of origin transportation designee to identify possible ways school division could assist with transportation to maintain current school placement
  - This information is considered during the Best Interest Determination (BID) process

# Residential Treatment Input for BID

- ▶ Residential placements are NOT schools of origin
- ▶ Residential placement is NOT the decision-maker; school division foster care liaison MUST be involved
- ▶ Staff from residential placements HAVE important information
  - [FC/ESSA Form D-17](#)

# No BID Is Required When:

- ▶ The new residency is zoned for the current school
- ▶ A student enters a Level C licensed residential placement
- ▶ A student returns from a residential placement or detention to the SAME foster care placement
- ▶ The distance between the school of origin and the new foster care placement is greater than 100 miles

Other considerations?

# Where is the student while the BID is pending?

- » Student Should NOT Be Disenrolled From Current Placement

# Joint Determination of Child's Best Interest

- As quickly as possible (e.g., within 3 work days), LDSS and appropriate school division representative shall jointly determine child's best interest for school placement with key partners. (Done with IEP team for students with disabilities, after FAPE determination as appropriate.)
- Presumption: Child will remain in same school, unless contrary to child's best interests.
- Two options for child:
  - Remain in current school where child was enrolled when placed in new residence
  - Enroll in school of child's new residence.

# FAQ

- ▶ What happens if we cannot meet the 72 hour deadline and complete the best interest determination?

# General Education Students

- ▶ LDSS must contact school division foster care liaison for child's current school to convene best interest determination meeting.
  - ▶ LDSS and school division foster care liaison for child's current school jointly determine child's best interest for school placement, in consultation with child & other key partners.
  - ▶ Child remains in current school, unless contrary to child's best interests.
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# Students with Disabilities Served Under IDEA

- ▶ The responsibility for determining school placement and the mechanism for making this determination are driven not only by Fostering Connections, but also by the state and federal regulations under IDEA.
  - ▶ The school division and LDSS must determine which school division is responsible under IDEA for the student's free appropriate public education (FAPE).
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# Students with Disabilities

## New Residence in Current School Division

- ▶ LDSS must contact school division foster care liaison for student's current school to complete the BID process
- ▶ An IEP representative must be included in the BID process
- ▶ Student remains in current school, unless contrary to student's best interests.
  - No IEP meeting needed if no change

# Students with Disabilities

## New Residence in Different School Division

- ▶ LDSS must contact school division foster care liaison for student's current school & for school of student's new residence to participate in the best interest determination process.
- ▶ School division for student's new residence is responsible for FAPE (per state special education regulations) and d-m
- ▶ If IEP team in school division of student's new residence determines that student needs to be placed in private day or residential facility for educational reasons, responsibility for FAPE shifts to the division where LDSS has custody.
  - Division where LDSS has custody is BID decision maker
  - IEP and BID may be concurrent
  - \*No BID needed for Level C residential

# Check for understanding

- ▶ Think–Pair–Share with scenarios
  - Case A
  - Case B
  - Case C

# BID Decision:

- »» Maintain Current School Placement

# Transportation to Maintain School

## Who is responsible?

- The LDSS is responsible for transportation (with school division assist, if agreement is reached)  
**UNLESS**
  - ❖ The student has an IEP *with specialized transportation* in the IEP,\* making the school division is responsible

\*IEP for a private placement assumes transportation is included – best practice: write it in the IEP

# Regular School Transportation

- For general education students and for students with disabilities who use regular school transportation, LDSS shall arrange for transportation and payment of transportation expenses.
  - Reasonable costs are legitimate maintenance expense:
    - Title IV–E for eligible children
    - CSA State Pool Funds for non–Title IV–E eligible children
  - Providers reimbursed state mileage rate with proof of miles driven
    - Foster parents
    - Friends, relatives and neighbors of child or foster parent
    - Employees of child placing agencies and residential programs
  - Other transportation:
    - Local school bus\* (reimburse with signed agreement/contract)
    - Bus fare or similar reasonable public transportation at established rate.
- \*See division cost per mile spreadsheet

# Specialized IEP Transportation

- For students with an IEP that requires “specialized” transportation to current school, such costs are paid by the school division responsible for FAPE for student to remain in current school.
- Includes individualized provisions, noted in the IEP, that are needed because of the student’s disability and necessary to guarantee access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Alternative placement to meet special ed needs assumes transportation even if it is not explicit in the IEP

# BID Decision:



Current School is NOT in the  
Student's Best Interest – Immediately  
Enroll in Local School

# Immediate Enrollment

- After you make the “joint” school placement decision, the **LDSS case worker** should contact the foster care liaison and let them know who will be bringing the child to school for enrollment.
- Immediate enrollment form (**FC/ESSA Form C-17**) should have the BID attached.

\*These are best practices.

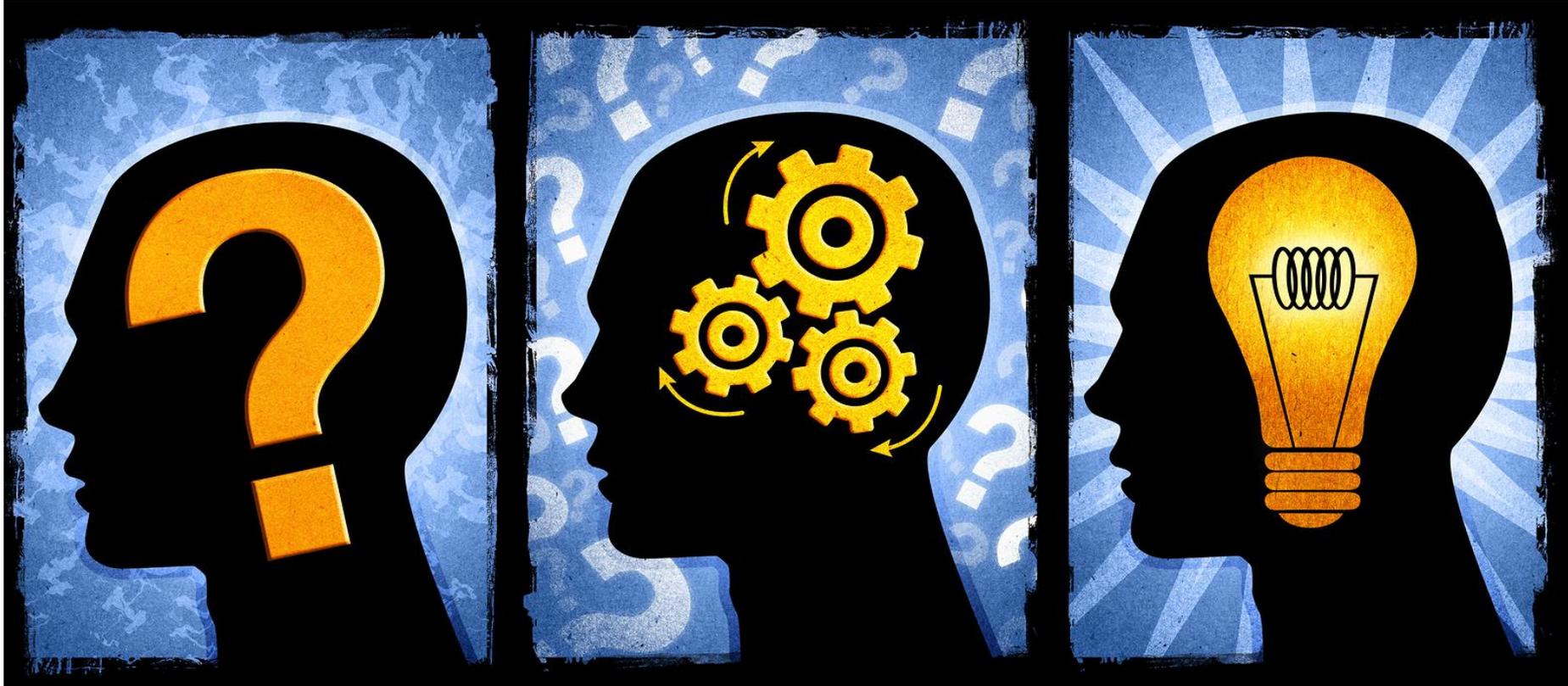
# Present Student for Enrollment

- LDSS, LCPA, or foster parent presents student to enroll in new school of residence.
- Gives school Immediate Enrollment of Child in Foster Care Form on yellow paper – signed by LDSS.
  - Documents all minimum legal requirements for person immediately enrolling the child: provides written statement, to best of his or her knowledge:
    - Child's name, age, and address of residence
    - Required certifications
    - Student is in good health and free from communicable or contagious disease

# School Immediately Enrolls Child

- ▶ Child shall be immediately & appropriately enrolled.
  - “Immediate” means no later than beginning of next school day after presentment for enrollment.
  - “Presentment” means person enrolling child has appeared at school and presented all required information and certifications.
  - “Enrollment” means child is attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

# Delays to Immediate Enrollment



# All Records Provided to New School

- ▶ If documents not immediately available when assuming custody of child or changing placements, LDSS/LCPA shall obtain and produce, or otherwise ensure compliance with these requirements, within 30 days after enrollment of child.
  - ▶ Sending and receiving schools shall expedite transfer of student's record.
  - ▶ For students with disabilities, copies of student's special education records, including most recent IEP, must be provided promptly.
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# RESOLVING SCHOOL PLACEMENT DISPUTES



# Fostering Futures



# What is Fostering Futures?

- Virginia's voluntary extended foster care program for youth who "age out" of foster care when they turn 18 until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday
- Authorized by the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2006 and Virginia's 2016 Appropriations Act (Item 346 #3c)

# Continuing Eligibility Criteria

- Participants must meet at least one of these five criteria to continue to be eligible for the program:
  1. Completing secondary education or in a GED program
  2. Enrolled in college or a vocational program
  3. Attending classes to promote employment or remove barriers to employment
  4. Working at least 80 hours per month, or
  5. Unable to meet one of the four conditions above due to a documented medical reason

# Basic LDSS Case Management Requirements

- Visit (face-to-face) with the participant at least monthly
- Conduct life skills assessments and develop transition plans
- Develop a foster care plan with participant which addresses permanency and family connections
- Continue requests for funding for services with the local Family Assessment and Planning Team for services

# Services & Funds

- Youth who participate in Fostering Futures are provided with the same monthly maintenance payment as they had been prior to 18
- Youth continue to be eligible for Chafee/IL funds to support them in activities that promote education or employment
- Youth participating in a post-secondary educational or vocational training program may be eligible for the Education & Training Vouchers (ETV) Program
- The LDSS will continue to seek funding for other services, as needed to promote the youth's plan, from FAPT

# Exit from Fostering Futures & Re-entry

- Participation may be terminated at any time by the participant through verbal or written notification to the service worker.
- Participation may be terminated at any time by the LDSS if it is determined that the youth no longer meets the eligibility criteria.
- Youth may re-enter by signing a new VCSSA any time prior to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday
- There is no limit on the number of times they may exit and re-enter

# In Foster Care

- Youth who are in Fostering Futures are considered to be **in foster care**
  - Fostering Connections and ESSA apply the same way they did prior to the youth turning 18
  - All policies and practices should continue to be followed
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# Unique Population

- Youth who are in Fostering Futures and still actively completing their high school education will be a relatively small population
- Youth in Fostering Futures are legally adults and their autonomy must be considered and respected
- They have the right to choose where they live and what their plan will be
- Youth have the right to change their mind about their plan and involvement in Fostering Futures

# Case D

Student from Hampton City with an IEP was placed in a residential setting Waynesboro in for the past six months and has attended school there. He is stepping down to a group home in Chesterfield.

- ▶ Is a BID required?
- ▶ Who are the decision makers?
- ▶ Create a flowchart or list the steps that must occur for this student to be in school. Consider potential challenges/barriers and possible solutions to those issues.



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