



GOAL 1 School Stability

Caseworkers' Roles

Blueprint Tools

Youth Are Entitled to Remain in Their Same School When Feasible

Youth in foster care move between living placements an average of once to twice a year. When youth move, they often are forced to change schools. This causes many youth in care to fall behind in school and even to drop out. Read the following tips to learn how you can help. Check the resource boxes for programs, publications, and information on finding your state's law.

What you can do:

- ✓ **Keep living placements stable whenever possible.**
The easiest and most effective way to keep a child's education stable is to minimize living placement changes.
- ✓ **When a youth must move, locate a new living placement in the same school district.**
Keep youth in the same school district whenever possible and in their best interest. Federal law (Title IV-E) requires you to consider a child's educational placement when deciding living placements. Your state may also have guidance on how to make this happen. Recruit foster families from the school community. Encourage the parents of a friend to become foster parents for the child. Engage school staff in identifying possible foster homes.
- ✓ **When youth must move to a different district, help them remain in their original school.**
Under the McKinney-Vento Act, youth who qualify as "awaiting foster care placement" in your state generally have this right, so checking with the McKinney-Vento liaison is a great first step. In some states, *all* youth in care have the right to stay in their original school. Even when there is no legal entitlement, schools may make exceptions, so always ask. (See McKinney-Vento resources, page 2.)
- ✓ **Help youth get transportation to their original school.**
Under the McKinney-Vento Act, youth are entitled to transportation to their original school. Therefore, youth who qualify as "awaiting foster care placement" in your state generally have this right. Some state laws also provide a right to transportation. If your state or locality should be providing transportation, make sure it's happening. If

Resources:

Community Placements:

Family to Family, a program of the Annie E. Casey Foundation works to change child welfare systems and keep children placed in their communities.

Find information at:

www.aecf.org/Home/MajorInitiatives/Family%20to%20Family.aspx

Transportation:

Find out about your state transportation entitlements and other state rights by looking at the *State School Stability Legislation Chart* (Available at www.abanet.org/child/education/home.shtml)

Resources:

Education Advocacy:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) publication, *Working Together to Improve Educational Outcomes*, has a comprehensive curriculum on educational advocacy. Find it at www.cwla.org/programs/trieschman/pride.htm.

there's no legal right to transportation, be creative. *Ask*: Is there anyone who could be agency approved? Can the agency arrange and pay for taxis or reimburse foster parents for providing transportation? Is the school willing to add a new stop to the bus route, or use special education or magnet school transportation?

✓ **Make rights meaningful by ensuring youth and their caretakers understand them.**

Ensure youth know about their right to remain in the school of origin, and that parents and foster parents have the information to help children identify and enroll in the best school for them.

✓ **Ensure that youth with disabilities receive an appropriate education.**

A child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) may provide for transportation to an appropriate school placement. As a result, it may help a child stay in his or her original school after a living placement move. Get a copy of the child's IEP for the child's case file. (In many states, you will need parental consent or a court order to get the IEP.) Once you have the document, make sure it is being honored and the child continues to be in an appropriate educational setting.

McKinney-Vento Resources:

- ✓ **Find your McKinney-Vento liaison** by contacting your state coordinator at http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php.
- ✓ **Identify how “awaiting placement” is defined in your state/locality** by reviewing *The McKinney-Vento Act and Children and Youth Awaiting Foster Care Placement: Improving Educational Outcomes through School Stability*. (Available at www.abanet.org/child/education/home.shtml)
- ✓ **Learn about state legal entitlements** by reviewing *Lessons Learned* and the *State School Stability Legislation Chart*. (Available at www.abanet.org/child/education/home.shtml)
- ✓ **Determine which school is in a child's best interests** by reviewing the National Center for Homeless Education's checklist. It is created for homeless youth, but can guide decisions for youth in care as well. (Available at www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/sch_sel_checklist.pdf)

This information is adapted from the **Blueprint for Change: Educational Success for Children in Foster Care**, published by the Legal Center for Foster Care & Education. To see the full publication, search a database on foster care education issues, and learn more federal and local law, go to www.abanet.org/child/education.