

WHAT THE SCHOOL NEEDS FROM DCFS

The schools are partners in addressing the educational needs of foster children. Like DCFS, schools need information to best serve the children. The following are some concerns shared by the schools that **DCFS can address** to help in building a positive working relationship.

- √ **Send a copy of the parent's signature (DCFS 179 / revised 11/04) or a court order authorizing the school to share information and copies of records with DCFS.**
- √ **Notify the school who the Holder of Education Rights is to make educational decisions for the child.** The school needs the name and contact information of the Holder of Education Rights to ensure implementation of AB490, to assess a child for special education, to participate in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting and sign the agreed upon document, etc. If the court makes a decision to change the person who is the Holder of Education Rights DCFS must share the information ASAP.
- √ **Give the school sufficient time to contact the teachers and receive feedback** when school reports are needed to include in court reports. If necessary contact the Education Liaison at the school district to assist you.
- √ **Make every effort possible to keep children in the school of origin.** If a move is necessary, the schools appreciate every effort made to place the child in the same school district, community or nearby school district so the child can remain in the same school. Learning is greatly enhanced by school stability. Class credits toward graduation are not lost when the student can complete the semester. Young children learning phonics for reading or multiplication tables will not have gaps in their knowledge if they can complete the school year with the same teacher.
- √ **Notify the school immediately of every change of placement.** Include in the notice the complete name and address of the caregiver, as well as the name and address of the child's current school. Locating school records and establishing the child's current grades is much easier if addressed immediately upon the change of placement. School records dramatically help the schools place the child in the appropriate classes to meet the child's needs, especially if the child is collecting credits toward high school graduation or receiving special education services.
- √ **Schedule a non-emergency visit with the child ahead of time with the school, during a lunch or class break and not class time.**
- √ **Ask for a place to visit the child that protects the child's confidentiality** or take the child to a safe location to talk and return the child to school.
- √ Encourage caregivers to **sign-up for and consistently have the child attend school-based educational support programs, like tutoring.**
- √ **Return all calls from the school promptly to ensure good communication.**

WHAT DCFS NEEDS FROM THE SCHOOL

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) are partners in addressing the educational needs of foster children. Like schools, DCFS needs information to best serve the children. The following are some concerns shared by DCFS that **schools can address** to help in building a positive working relationship.

- √ **Keep knowledge of the child's foster care status limited to a need-to-know basis among school staff.** Confidentiality and discretion are important to the child, family, DCFS, and the court.
- √ **Respond promptly to requests for records or completion of forms** (DCFS 1726 Request for School Report) as the information is needed to ensure the child has the educational opportunities he/she needs to learn and to maintain good communication with the child's caregiver, attorney, and judge. Children's Social Workers must prepare reports and attach grades, attendance records, IEP (when applicable), high school credits, etc. to the court report.
- √ **Help with establishing how many credits a youth has toward high school graduation.** The policies for the number of credits required for graduation and how to calculate and apply partial credits toward graduation differ with each school district; therefore assistance from the school is needed.
- √ **Maintain school stability by arranging for the child to attend the school of origin,** including transportation whenever possible.
- √ **Assistance to enroll the child in school.** Depending on the circumstances, the caregiver, Children's Social Worker, and child may not have all the information requested by the school at the time of enrollment, however AB490 provides the child immediate enrollment in school and the support of school staff is most appreciated.
- √ **An invitation to the Children's Social Worker to the IEP meeting** would be helpful for children receiving special education services. By meeting together the school and DCFS can better address the child's needs.
- √ **Discretely call the child to the office and provide a quiet, confidential place for the discussion** when the Children's Social Worker must visit the child at school to conduct an interview.
- √ **Notify the Children's Social Worker if the child is at risk of suspension or expulsion.** Together a plan can be developed to address the child and school's needs.
- √ **Share with the Children's Social Worker resources available at the school that can assist the child to achieve academically,** like tutoring, Exit Exam preparation, mental health supports, etc.
- √ **Return all calls from DCFS promptly to ensure good communication.**
- √ The establishment of **Education Liaisons for Foster Youth at each school district has been a tremendous resource** to improve the educational outcomes for children in foster care. DCFS looks forward to building an effective collaborative to address the needs of the child and concerns of DCFS and the school.