

School Change Process for Children in Out of Home Care

Policy Number: OCM 13.00

Subject: School Change Process for Children in Out-of-Home Care

Previous Version December 13, 2018 (IA 3.00 OCM 13.00)

Release Date: March 20, 2019

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Any information referenced within this document is considered to be a part of this policy with the exception of the “related resources” section.

Summary:

The policy details the process the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) and Ongoing contracted agencies follow to determine whether it is in a child’s best interest to change or remain in the school they are enrolled in, while they are in out-of-home care. This policy complies with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015 Wisconsin Act 161, and [DSP memos 2017-16i, 2017-08i, and 2016-37i](#). This policy and the ESSA’s guiding principle is to support the educational experiences of children in out-of-home care by improving collaboration between DMCPS, Ongoing contracted agencies, local public education agencies, the child’s caregivers, and other service providers.

Definitions

Resident school/ school of residence: the school in the district in which the out-of-home care placement is located. Once the child is enrolled in the “resident school,” it becomes the school of origin (in cases where the out-of-home care placement changes in the future).

School of origin: the school the child is enrolled in or was last enrolled at the time of the placement in out-of-home care

Supportive parties: refers to all the individuals who have played a supportive role in the child’s life and may include the parent/guardian, placement provider,

school district points of contact, and any supportive person that child has bonded with (relatives, school personnel, mentors, etc.).

Policy:

The ESSA and DMCPs require that a child remain in the school they are enrolled in at the time of out-of-home (OHC) placement, unless it is in the best interest of the child to change schools. Factors in determining best interest include proximity and appropriateness of the educational setting. When a school change is being considered, the OCM must consult the parent/legal guardian, the child (if age or developmentally appropriate), placement provider, appropriate school staff, and other supportive adults in the child's life to determine if it is in the best interest of the child to change schools.

After the assigned OCM consults all the supportive parties, they may find that all the supportive parties agree or disagree with a school change.

If consensus is reached, the OCM must consult their Supervisor for approval and complete the required steps below under the Procedure section, bullet I, to initiate changing the child's school.

If there is not consensus among the supportive parties or if there are issues with a school change, a Best Interest Determination meeting, facilitated by the DMCPs Community Liaison, must occur within five business days of discovering the issues. Other issues that may arise related to a school change that may require a Best Interest Determination meeting or contact with the DMCPs Community Liaison at schoolchangerequest@wisconsin.gov include:

1. The resident school is not willing to enroll the child or the school of origin is not allowing the student to attend school.
2. The child has not been enrolled in school for one week or more
3. The caseworker has concerns that any parties are trying to circumvent the best interest determination process
4. The caseworker is experiencing school related issues and needs assistance navigating the situation

Procedures

When a school change is being considered, the OCM must first discuss if it is in the child's best interest with the parent/legal guardian, the child (if age or developmentally appropriate), and placement provider. If everyone agrees a school change should occur, including appropriate school staff and other supportive adults, then the procedure detailed in bullet I must occur.

If the supportive parties do not agree, the OCM must initiate a school change request meeting that brings all the parties together, detailed in bullet II.

- I. If there is consensus among the supportive parties that the school change should occur because it is in the best interest of the child, the OCM must consult their supervisor to obtain approval to process the school change.

- A. If supervisory approval is obtained, the OCM must update the education tab in eWiSACWIS noting the reason for the school change to the child's resident school. See the Education Tab job aid for more guidance on required fields.
 - B. The OCM must submit an Education Passport to the school of origin and resident school and ensure the enrollment process occurs in timely manner for the student.
 - i. Note: The last page of Education Passport, under "other relevant information" must explain that a school change is occurring because consensus was reached among the supportive parties.
 - C. If any issues arise regarding timely enrollment, the OCM should contact their Supervisor and/or the DMCPs Community Liaison.
- II. If consensus is not reached among the supportive parties that the school change should occur, the OCM must do the following:
- A. When the OCM, and/or OHC provider requests a school change, the OCM must notify the DMCPs Community Liaison (schoolchangerequest@wisconsin.gov) and initiate organizing a Best Interest Determination meeting within five business days (via phone or in-person) to include the following individuals and themselves:
 - i. DMCPs Community Liaison
 - ii. Designees for the child's school of origin and resident school – if the OCM does not know who the designee is they may contact the DMCPs Community Liaison to request the Point of Contact information for each school
 - iii. Foster parent(s) or OHC provider
 - iv. Biological parents: The biological parent/legal guardian must be contacted to participate in this meeting. If a biological parent is unresponsive or non-cooperative throughout the best interest determination process DMCPs and partner agencies and staff have the authority to proceed with the decision making process and change the child's school.
 - v. The child (if age 12 or older, or developmentally appropriate)
 - vi. Other supportive individuals in the child's life (school social worker or counselor, Education Liaisons, mentor, etc.)
 - vii. OCM's supervisor
 - B. In advance of the meeting, the OCM will send the following Best Interest Determination worksheet to the DMCPs Community Liaison for their review.
 - C. The DMCPs Community Liaison is responsible for facilitating the best interest determination meeting with all key parties to collaboratively make a decision.
 - i. The cost of transportation may not be a factor in determining best interest. See [DCF DPI Joint Letter: ESSA Guidance](#). Transportation may be negotiated after the best interest

determination meeting depending upon which school districts are involved.

- D. If a decision has been reached by consensus during the meeting regarding whether or not the child should change schools, the Community Liaison will send an email within 1 business day after the meeting, to the school contacts and OCM of the decision and OCM informs the parent or legal guardians, OHC provider, and all other parties that participated in the best interest determination meeting.
- E. If consensus cannot be reached during the best interest determination meeting, the DMCPs Community Liaison issues a decision within 2 business day ([*ESSA Guidance: Best Interest and Education Stability for Children in OHC*](#)) and informs the parties noted above (bullet 4) with an explanation.
- F. The OCM must update the Education Passport in eWiSACWIS and submit it to the child's school of origin and (if applicable) the school district in which the child is enrolling within one business day of receiving the notification from DMCPs Community Liaison. See [*DMCPs Education Passport Policy*](#).
 - i. Note: The last page of education passport, under "other relevant information" must explain that a school change is occurring because consensus was reached among the supportive parties.
- G. The OCM must update the education tab in eWiSACWIS with relevant information about the child. See the eWiSACWIS education tab job aid for guidance.
- H. The DMCPs Community Liaison completes the *DMCPs Child's Best Interest Determination Worksheet* and uploads it under the education tab in eWiSACWIS within two business days of the decision.
- I. The DMCPs Community Liaison will monitor and track all BID meetings, noting the date of the BID, individuals present, decision issued and explanation for the decision.

Note: If approved by DMCPs, a child residing in Milwaukee County may change schools and enroll in the resident school (based on OHC provider's address) within or outside of Milwaukee County. The 2015 Wisconsin Act 161 enables:

- DMCPs and its ongoing contracted agencies to access the child's educational records in situations where it is not possible to obtain parental consent on a timely basis (such as the parent cannot be located or is unresponsive.)
- School districts to disclose pertinent education records, without parental consent, to a state or local child welfare agency authorized to access a student's case plan when the agency is legally responsible for the care and protection of the student.

Other Considerations

During the best interest determination process, the child will remain enrolled in their school of origin until a decision is made by DMCPs.

If an OCM learns that a child has been enrolled in a new school before having the opportunity to consult all the required parties or before a best interest determination meeting facilitated by DMCPs occurs, the OCM must complete the Education Passport and education tab in eWiSACWIS and notify the DMCPs Community Liaison. See [DMCPs Education Passport Policy](#).

The OCM is responsible for ensuring school transportation arrangements are in place for the child. If a school change decision has not been issued and transportation has not been solidified by the 14th calendar day, the OCM should contact their agency's education stability point of contact for assistance. See [DMCPs Education Points of Contact Memo](#) for further details.

Responsibilities

DMCPs: Child welfare agency ensuring the safety of children and families when an allegation of abuse or neglect is made. If it is determined that the child must be removed from their parents/guardians home, Initial Assessment determines who the child will be placed with initially.

DMCPs Community Liaison: the Milwaukee County child welfare point of contact responsible for facilitating the best interest determination process and provides technical assistance to OCMs and school districts when needed.

Ongoing Contracted Agencies: Child welfare agencies contracted by DMCPs to provide ongoing case management services to children placed with an OHC provider or providing intensive in-home services (IHS) to ensure for the safety and well-being of the child(ren). The agency determines with whom the child is placed.

School: Local education agency, responsible for providing education services and transportation to children residing within their district, in accordance with [DPI guidance](#) and the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#).

Related Resources:

- [2015 Wisconsin Act 161](#)
- [Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 48 \(48.357 and 48.64\(1r\)\)](#)
- [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Every Student Succeeds Act](#)

[DMCPS Policies, Memos, and Forms](#)

- Education Passport Policy IA 61.00, CM 61.00
- Education Passport Job Aid
- Education Points of Contact Memo
- [DMCPS Forms](#) for IA and Ongoing on DCF website

DCF Policies, Standards, and Resources

- [Caseworker Desk Guide: Information Sharing with Schools](#)
- [Caseworker Desk Guide: Promoting School Success for Children in Foster Care](#)
- [Department of Children and Families \(DCF\) and Department of Public Instruction publication "Educational Services for Children placed in Foster Care July 2010"](#)
- [Education Passport Quick Reference Guide for eWiSACWIS documentation \(2015\)](#)
- [eWiSACWIS Milwaukee Education Passport Training \(2015\)](#)
- [Ongoing Standards](#)
- [DSP memos 2017-16i, 2017-08i, and 2016-37i](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care, U.S. Departments of Education and Health & Human Services
- ESSA final regulations
- Joint Letter with Foster Care Assurances