

Foster Children

HOW YOU CAN
CREATE A POSITIVE
EDUCATIONAL
EXPERIENCE
FOR THE
FOSTER CHILD



& Education

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MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Foster Children



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MEETING THE CHALLENGES

Introduction

It's hard to overestimate the importance of education in the life of a foster child. The school experience can greatly affect the quality of a child's day-to-day life – and the quality of her future when she leaves care. While in care, foster children need school as a point of stability in lives that can be battered by change. As adults, with less of a safety net than children from intact families, they need a strong educational foundation in order to support themselves. But when it comes to succeeding in school, foster children face unique challenges and obstacles beyond those faced by even their most economically disadvantaged non-foster peers. And busy child welfare professionals, foster parents, and birth parents may be distracted or overwhelmed, leaving no adult paying attention to a foster child's educational needs.

Increasingly, researchers have documented these issues, and child welfare professionals have become aware of the need to pay closer attention to the education of children in the child welfare system. But the challenges can seem insurmountable, requiring solutions so difficult and expensive that nothing can be done. Between 1999 and 2002, the Vera Institute of Justice and the New York City

Administration for Children's Services ran a pilot project, in partnership with the New York City Board of Education, to tackle those challenges. The project, Safe and Smart, provides lessons about the special issues foster children face in trying to get an education and suggests which responses designed to improve their outcomes can work – and which might not. We are not suggesting replicating Safe and Smart but rather learning from its experience. Our key finding is that simple and inexpensive supports and tools can go a long way towards helping adults improve the school experience for youth in foster care.

This paper describes some of these special challenges, ranging from the individual to the systemic. This paper and the two companion pieces, "Adult Involvement" and "Enrollment/Transfers," have been designed for the busy child welfare professional and for foster parents, birth parents, judges, and school staff – any adult struggling to tackle this important issue. While Safe and Smart provided the inspiration in preparing these materials, we supplemented that experience with a review of the research and interviews with a wide range of experts in the child welfare system. We hope you will find this information useful in your daily practice, and we encourage you to share it with your staff and peers and copy sections to use in trainings.

Recognizing the Challenge: How are Foster Children Doing in School?

Foster children lag behind their non-foster peers in school. Research over the past three decades has shown that, compared to the general school population, the half-million foster children in the United States:

- have poorer attendance rates,
- are less likely to perform at grade level,
- are more likely to have behavior and discipline problems,
- are more likely to be assigned to special education classes, and
- are less likely to attend college.

A 2001 study in the American School Board Journal found that foster children often repeat a grade and are twice as likely as the rest of the school population to drop out before graduation. And among all students who drop out of school, fewer foster children eventually earn their GED than non-foster dropouts. Staff at the Vera Institute of Justice found that foster children in New York City not only performed poorly compared to children citywide but also compared to children in their own economically distressed communities.¹

The old assumption that foster children suffered from the same barriers as other economically disadvantaged children

suggested that the only solution was to improve the school experience for all poor children and that there was nothing the child welfare system could do. But this recent research and our own experience in developing Safe and Smart suggest that child welfare professionals can address many of the special challenges that foster children face.

Obstacles to Educational Success

No adult in the foster care system wants children to do poorly in school; they often just don't think about school very much. When we talked with foster children, many told us that the only time their foster parents, caseworkers, judges, or lawyers paid attention to how they were doing in school was when they were misbehaving or failing to attend. And sometimes they did not get noticed by the adults around them even then. School is forgotten or treated as a side issue as the adults worry about protecting children from neglect or abuse, finding them new homes, or transferring them if a placement does not work out. So the first challenge is to pay attention and to look at the special obstacles foster children face in trying to get an education, many of them inadvertently created by the adults.

Lack of Continuity in Education

For children in care, placement – and subsequent changes in their foster care residence – often means a change of

school as well. Most research shows that transfers have a harmful effect on educational outcomes. The absence of required school records or other documents can lead to a delay in registering at the new school and a gap of days or weeks in learning.² But less recognized is the effect of placement transfers on the child. Each transfer requires the child to adjust to new teachers and peers and to a curriculum that may differ considerably from her previous school. Too many transfers can cause a child to disengage and give up on school. Transfers also play havoc with continuity of special services. Many jurisdictions are now making it a priority to keep children in their present school both when they enter care and if they experience multiple placements. Keeping school as a point of stability can help foster children succeed educationally and give them peers and caring adults to help them weather the changes at home.

Requirements of the Child Welfare System

The foster care system makes many demands on those who are part of it, including the children. There are court appearances, sessions with counselors and therapists, and medical appointments that frequently conflict with school. Children in care told researchers at Vera that they missed tests and homework assignments because of scheduling conflicts and, therefore, fell behind in their school work. Judges and caseworkers should make it a priority to schedule appointments after school hours.

Lack of Emphasis on Education

If the systems responsible for the well-being of foster children – child welfare, education, and the courts – do not place a strong emphasis on the education of foster children and work together to promote success in school, education will fall through the cracks. Education planning should be a part of the initial discussions about placement when a child enters care and whenever that placement changes. In New York City, education plans are discussed at the conferences held within 72 hours of placement and again after 30 days. Education then becomes part of the plan. Here is an excerpt from one plan:

All the children should remain at their current school. They seem to be doing very well academically with no reported problems and as a result, it would be in their best interest to continue at that school.

The courts have a role to play, too. Judges can raise the question of the child's education during all Family Court hearings. They can hold child welfare agencies and schools responsible for meeting the child's educational needs. Joseph M. Lauria, administrative judge in the Family Court of the City of New York, suggests that "the education issue should be raised every time" a case is heard in court. He said that judges soon will implement "an Education Checklist developed by the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children in New York City Family Court."

Low Expectations

All children respond to expectations, and when the adults in their lives expect them to do poorly, they often fulfill those expectations. Too often teachers, guidance counselors, and other school staff do not expect foster children to excel in school. Even foster parents, some of whom may have little formal education themselves, and caseworkers may expect nothing more than passing grades. Few foster children are encouraged to think about college; they are much more likely to be directed to vocational education programs. And few are encouraged to participate in the extra-curricular activities that are associated with higher academic achievement. Yet recent studies of older youth in foster care show that they often have high educational aspirations, resent the fact that more is not expected of them, and would benefit from adult encouragement.

An Absence of Advocates

Children in foster care generally do not have an adult who is their educational advocate – someone who knows her way around the school system; helps navigate the registration and transfer process; monitors grade and attendance reports; and makes sure that the child is properly tested, placed in the appropriate grade, and receiving the necessary services. For most non-foster students that advocate is a family member, usually a parent. Foster children have lots of adults responsible for their care – but no one person

responsible for their education. While a growing number of advocacy organizations are promoting the education of foster children and raising awareness of its importance, general measures are not sufficient. Every foster child needs a designated adult to act as that child's individual advocate. That person not only can intercede with the school system on the child's behalf but can offer the encouragement a child needs to achieve his educational aspirations.

The Stigma of Being in Foster Care

Many foster children do not seek help or engage in the social relationships that contribute to a positive educational experience because they are ashamed of being in care. When a Vera Institute researcher asked a middle school boy if any of his fellow students knew he was in foster care, he replied emphatically, "I hope not!" The children may become socially isolated and withdrawn as a way to avoid embarrassment or to shield themselves from teasing and bullying. Much of the research that focuses on direct experiences of youth in care has been conducted in Britain. A study of foster children in residential homes in England found that many did not attend school because they felt harassed by other students. "They pick on me for being in here," one student reported. "They say, 'At least I'm with me mum and dad, and you're in a home.'"

The Burdens of Past Experience

Some children enter foster care already behind in school because of abuse or, more often, neglect. The neglectful parent may have failed to register the child in school or, more commonly, did not encourage or may have discouraged attendance. The children we interviewed talk about missing school in order to care for younger siblings. Recent research also suggests that children entering foster care have more medical issues than their non-foster peers, and illness may have prevented them from attending school. Whatever their experience before entering care, removal from home and separation from parents and siblings can have serious psychological and emotional consequences, which may be manifested in inappropriate behavior at school. Some children will act out; others will withdraw. Concerns about birth parents and worry about siblings from whom they have been separated can be distractions that keep the children from focusing on their school work. Studies suggest that the combination of pre-placement experiences and placement itself has a detrimental effect on both academic performance and behavior in school.

The Gap Between the Systems

Researchers generally cite – and the Safe and Smart staff observed – a lack of coordination between the child welfare and educational systems as an underlying obstacle to helping foster children succeed in school. But the gap between

the two systems is wider than simply a lack of coordination. In many instances there is a fundamental lack of understanding of how the other system works and a lack of time to focus on the educational needs of the children.

Caseworkers must of necessity devote their primary attention to the safety of the foster children in their care, making sure that the children have secure homes and are not neglected or abused. Even those caseworkers who want to take a greater role in the educational lives of the children usually find that their heavy caseloads and mountains of paperwork leave them little time to focus on school matters. And if they manage to overcome those challenges, they still may be frustrated by a Byzantine educational bureaucracy that has little knowledge of the child welfare system.

On the other hand, school officials – especially classroom teachers – are often unaware of which students are in foster care. Without the social history of the child, staff may not recognize the reasons behind aberrant behavior or may place a child in special education unnecessarily. Staff may be confused about which adult has guardianship of the child or whom to call when academic or behavioral problems arise. They complain that foster parents and caseworkers show little inclination to learn about the child's progress in school. And recent pressure on schools to show gains in standardized test scores may mean they are less likely to make the extra effort to help children in foster care who lag behind academically.

In response to the growing awareness of this communication gap, a number of efforts are underway to increase coordination between the educational and child welfare systems:

- In Illinois, the Center for Child Welfare and Education, a partnership between Northern Illinois University and the state's Department of Children and Family Services, trains foster parents to be advocates for the education of the children in their care. More than 18,000 foster parents have received the six-hour training.
- Many foster care agencies employ an education specialist to help foster children and their guardians maneuver the school system and to act as a go-between for the two systems. Their duties vary considerably across agencies, and with funding precarious, some agencies are eliminating the position. In New York City fewer than half of the contract agencies have such a staff person.
- San Diego County, California, was the first jurisdiction to adopt a Health and Education Passport, a record of a foster child's educational and medical history that travels with him from placement to placement and school to school. The passport includes such information as the child's immunization record, schools attended, grade level and performance, attendance record, and special needs. The Washington State Legislature enacted a similar passport system in 1997, but recent reports

from both jurisdictions suggest that issues of confidentiality and the absence of procedures for sharing of information have kept the programs from being fully effective.

- Data-sharing agreements hold some promise. If they succeed, both systems can assess the needs of individual children and determine what services are necessary. In New York City, the Administration for Children's Services and the Board of Education developed a data-sharing plan and have been working to implement the plan since 1997. ACS and the Department of Education (successor to the old Board) now hold bi-monthly meetings at which data-sharing issues are discussed. But as we found at Safe and Smart, data sharing is unlikely to be an easy or quick solution to improving educational outcomes for foster children.

The systemic level reforms are promising – but as these examples illustrate, they can be challenging to implement and slow in creating real improvements on the ground for the current generation of children in care. In these materials, we do not want to discourage systemic reform but rather caution against seeing it as the sole solution. Such reforms can be paired with concrete, low-cost, individualized attention to foster children. Our experiences with Safe and Smart provide some lessons about the challenges and successes you can have if you focus on individual, educational achievement for children in care.

The Safe and Smart Program

In 1999, the Vera Institute of Justice and the Administration for Children's Services joined forces to create a demonstration project called Safe and Smart. The unique aspect of the project – operated in partnership with the New York City Board of Education – was to place child welfare workers in schools to provide guidance and counseling to foster children and to help resolve academic and behavioral problems.³ These caseworkers, ACS employees known as "school specialists," were trained by Vera and deployed in five Bronx County middle schools. Vera and ACS chose middle schools because research shows that these years are a critical educational and developmental period, before high school when most drop-outs occur.

Safe and Smart specialists focused on improving school attendance and academic performance, but they soon learned firsthand about the many obstacles that foster children face: changes in placement, mandated medical and court appointments that keep them out of classes, and the trauma from past abuse and emotional concerns about their biological families that distract attention from schoolwork. As caseworkers themselves, they thought they knew a lot about foster children and the child welfare system, but they were shocked by how much they did not know. They encountered confusion over how to register a child for school and found foster parents who were disinterested, felt disconnected from the school system, or thought that

school was the job of the caseworker. Over the three years of the program (1999-2002) the specialists documented these obstacles for the individual children in Safe and Smart and struggled to solve them. After often rocky beginnings, they succeeded in developing strong relationships with school personnel and were recognized by the principals, teachers, and guidance counselors as the person to turn to when problems arose. Because they also maintained relationships with the children's foster parents and caseworkers, the specialists were able to reach out to all the adults responsible for the children's well-being.

The program was successful on several measures:

- Because foster children have poorer attendance records than other students, and because attendance is strongly linked to academic achievement, the program set a goal of matching the citywide average attendance for middle school, 91 percent. By the end of the 2001-2002 school year, Safe and Smart children had achieved an attendance rate of 92 percent.
- Safe and Smart children recorded modest, but real, academic gains. The specialists put a high priority on tutoring for the participating children, and more than half were placed in tutoring programs. Almost twice as many children improved their grade average as those whose average was unchanged or declined.

- Safe and Smart increased foster parent participation at parent-teacher conferences by working directly with the foster parents of the children in the program and then with foster care contract agencies.

But our experience with Safe and Smart also highlighted real challenges – challenges that did not come from the children, who were very receptive to the program, but rather from the adults and the systems surrounding the children.

Enrolling the Children

During the entire life of the program, despite extraordinary efforts, we struggled to enroll enough foster children in Safe and Smart to justify the expense of dedicating a child welfare specialist to each school. When we began, the common refrain was that the children themselves would fight enrollment because of the stigma attached to their foster care status. Sensitive to that concern, we sought quiet ways to approach foster children, but in order to do that we needed to know which children were in care. We knew from geographic data that we had concentrated our services in neighborhoods with extremely high levels of children in care. Nonetheless, there was no school or child welfare database that could tell us where foster children were enrolled. During the life of the project, ACS and the school system signed an agreement allowing restricted sharing of information, but the databases initially proved incompatible

and could not provide real-time information about current enrollment. Desperate, we resorted to hand-checking school rosters – labor intensive and expensive – but with a population so mobile, we found fewer than half of the children we expected.

Ironically, when we did identify foster children and approached them, we encountered none of the expected resistance. Virtually every child we invited to become a part of Safe and Smart enrolled. Instead of resistance, there was relief. The school specialists had created a safe space in which it was okay to come out as a foster child without risk of stigma and with the companionship and support of other children in the same situation. In fact, the children reported that one of the greatest benefits to them of the Safe and Smart program was that they no longer felt so alone, so isolated. In the end, we created a great program for the children who enrolled, but limited enrollment kept the program from blossoming into a viable option for replication.

The lesson we learned was not the one we expected – that foster children would avoid us – but rather that our reliance on databases proved misplaced. With Safe and Smart, the failure to find a concentration of foster children from a school-based perspective pushed us to successfully experiment with other, more child welfare-based avenues to address education issues for foster children.

Working with the Adults

We also found unexpected challenges when it came to involving the adults in the lives of foster children. The specialists worked with foster parents but were shocked to find how many of them had little education or had bad experiences with school and so were ill-equipped to tackle homework or talk to a teacher about how a child was doing in school. The specialists knew it would be hard to communicate with busy caseworkers, but now they could look at the challenge through the eyes of an educator who lacked their specialized knowledge and had less time. And they worked with teachers and school personnel, who welcomed with enthusiasm the extra support for a population the school staff knew had needs, but whom they felt ill-equipped to serve. While the specialists found many devoted educators, they also found some teachers reluctant to invest in foster children, assuming that investment would be wasted because the child would soon move again – a fact that too often proved true. In the end, the school specialists decided that, in school matters, foster children may have too many adults in their lives with each assuming it was someone else’s job to address the child’s educational needs.

Finally, the school specialists found that, in some respects, their roles did not allow them to do enough to help the children. They could document the difficulties and ease some of the transitions – for example, sudden moves into or out of the school as the result of a change in placement – but they could not change the underlying decision-making. They

could not, for example, stop a caseworker from pulling a child out of school over and over again to attend appointments or stop a caseworker from deciding to transfer the child to a new home, far away, with only six weeks left in the school year.

Tackling Systemic Issues

In the final year of the program, the specialists stepped beyond their school assignments to start tackling some of the systemic issues. They began to train caseworkers. Their unique position enabled the specialists to convey the importance of educational issues to their child welfare peers as well as how to work within the educational system. They piloted a project to improve attendance at parent-teacher nights, working with several agencies to creatively engage caseworkers and foster parents. They helped Vera and ACS organize the first-ever citywide training on registering foster children for school. They helped provide materials for additional trainings focused on increasing parental involvement in education and enrolling a child in special education. And they stressed the need for a single adult to be designated and held responsible for paying attention to the child’s education.

Perhaps the greatest contribution they made was a passionate and persuasive case for why the child welfare senior management should and could do more to address educational issues for foster children. The result was renewed attention to education issues at the most senior

levels – including the appointment of a senior child welfare manager to focus almost exclusively on education issues – and the institutionalization of many of the innovations developed in that last year of the project.

Safe and Smart made it easier for caseworkers in New York City to care about education, and it highlighted the need for some concrete changes in practice that could help improve the educational experience of foster children. But caseworkers cannot do it all alone. They need guidance and training from their managers; they need specialized support from the education system, and they need judges and others who can provide leadership to raise the level of attention given to educational issues for foster children.

Conclusion

Systemic reform is important, but you do not have to wait for systemic change to begin to make real improvements for the children in your care. As we have suggested, relatively simple low-cost solutions can make a big difference:

- minimizing the number of transfers and placing a priority on keeping the child in her home school;
- minimizing the number of appointments and scheduling those appointments after school hours;
- asking children about their homework and report cards;
- recognizing at the time of placement that the children will need extra educational help and enrolling them immediately in tutoring services;
- designating an individual as advocate for the child's education.

The two companion pieces that follow suggest other concrete steps you can take to improve the quality of foster children's life at school and give them a better shot at success after they leave care. In removing children from their homes and birth families and placing them in care, we are making them a promise that we will help provide them with a brighter future. To deliver on that promise, we must pay attention to education. We hope these materials will help you help the children in your care.

1. Marni Finkelstein, Mark Wamsley, and Doreen Miranda, *What Keeps Children in Foster Care From Succeeding in School? Views of Early Adolescents and the Adults in Their Lives*. Vera Institute of Justice, June 2002, Page 1. Also, *Working with Foster Children in School: A Summary Report on the Safe and Smart Demonstration Project*, Vera Institute of Justice, June 2002 (unpublished); based on data from New York City Board of Education Annual School Reports, 1999-2001.

2. Increased attention by child welfare agencies to initial registration of children in school has paid off: a study by the Vera Institute of Justice in partnership with the

New York City Administration for Children's Services documented improved registration and attendance for the majority of children immediately after being placed in care compared to attendance prior to placement.

3. Other jurisdictions, such as Los Angeles, have successfully piloted placement of child protective staff in schools to partner with educators on potential issues of abuse or neglect. But Safe and Smart created a different and challenging role for child welfare staff in requiring that they provide on-going educational support to children in care.

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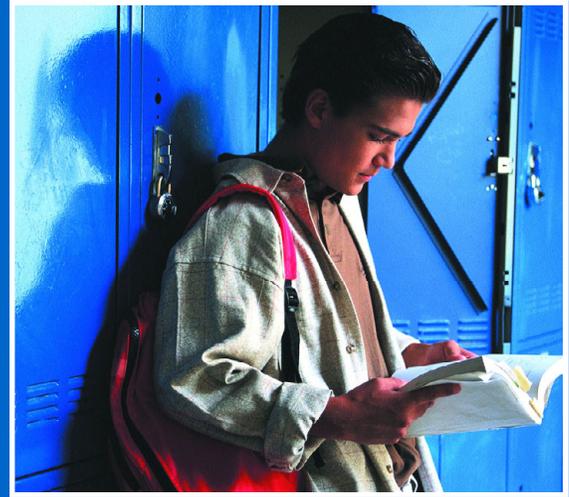
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ADULT INVOLVEMENT

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ADULT INVOLVEMENT

One of the characteristics that all foster children share is the number of adults accountable for their well-being. Ideally, foster parents, birth parents (if they are still in their children's lives), caseworkers and education specialists in the child welfare system, and school staff all would take a strong interest in a child's educational progress. What's more likely, however, is that a lack of coordination among the adults will result in the educational needs of the child falling through the cracks.

Not paying attention can have serious effects on the child's academic progress. Studies show that all students tend to do better in school when the adults in their lives are actively engaged in their education – attending parent-teacher conferences and other school activities as well as monitoring homework. Because studies also show that children in care experience greater educational deficits than the average child, their need for parental involvement is even greater. Yet they are less likely to have foster parents or guardians who take an active role in their education.

The Vera Institute's Safe and Smart program identified two simple, inexpensive, and complementary steps for strengthening adult involvement in the education of foster children. The first is to assign primary responsibility for monitoring the child's education to a specific individual, while encouraging all the adults in her life to follow her progress at school. The second is to actively promote foster and/or birth parent interaction with the school by emphasizing attendance at parent-teacher conferences.

Primary Responsibility

Making more adults aware of a child's progress at school might improve the chances that one would take responsibility for checking the child's attendance record, picking up report cards, meeting with teachers, and responding to academic or behavioral problems. Making one of those adults primarily responsible for overseeing the child's schooling would more likely ensure that education receives the attention it needs if the child is to succeed at school and later in life.

Confusion about which adult is responsible starts at the beginning of the child welfare placement. Who decides – the caseworker or foster parent or group home staff member or birth parent – where the child should go to school once she enters placement? And if the child needs to transfer schools, who is responsible for enrolling her? School staff often complain that in the case of foster children, they do not know who is in charge. Even signing simple forms – permission slips for field trips, to receive after-school services, or to participate in sports teams – becomes complicated. Vera's Safe and Smart staff found that many foster children were excluded from those activities because foster parents did not believe they had the authority to sign, and caseworkers were too busy to pay attention to such simple tasks. The law itself is confusing: while the birth parent may have erred enough for the state to remove her child, she retains some rights, including the presumption that she is the only person who can consent to special education.

The Role of the Caseworker

Vera's experience suggests that the caseworker must be trained and encouraged to designate which adult will serve as the child's educational advocate – and that judges can play a key role in ensuring that such an advocate is appointed. First, of course, the caseworker must understand the need to pay attention to the child's education. (See "Meeting the Challenges" on why this is important.) Second, the caseworker is often in a position to understand which adult can best serve as the primary point person. Third, the caseworker often has explicit responsibility for collecting some basic educational information about the children on her caseload.

In New York City, for example, the regulations of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) require caseworkers to visit the child's school twice a year. In theory, during these visits they can collect report cards and attendance records; meet with teachers, counselors, and school administrators; or even arrange to meet the foster parent at the school for a discussion that focuses strictly on educational issues. In practice, caseworkers report that they struggle with this responsibility. They find many schools to be intimidating and unwelcoming places. Because they are unfamiliar with the school schedule and with school regulations, they show up at inconvenient times and demand report cards and attendance records – but they do not get them. They lack the necessary consents and they do not understand school processes. As a result, some give up while others spend hours trying to decipher the system.

Vera and ACS staff found that arming caseworkers with basic information – and tool kits – was an effective and efficient way to help them meet these responsibilities. But the key was

to encourage them to designate responsibility for the child's education to a single adult – the foster parent, the group home staff member, themselves, a specialist – or to turn to the birth parent to serve in this role.

Birth Parents as Advocates

If the caseworker determines that the birth parent is likely to resume custody, she may decide that the parent can best serve as educational advocate.

There are great advantages to having the birth parent be the advocate if she is capable of doing it. Education law pays great deference to the parental role – and as stated above, child welfare placement does not sever those rights. Consequently, the birth parent must be involved in educational decision-making even after placement, particularly if the child has special needs. When a parent refuses or is unable to serve in this role, education law recognizes the right to appoint a *guardian ad litem* to make educational decisions for the child. But if the caseworker fails to coordinate with the school, special education officials will simply appoint a *guardian ad litem* from an available pool – and yet another adult, one who knows very little about that child, will become officially responsible for the child's special educational needs.

Vera and ACS teamed up to provide special education training to caseworkers that reinforced the birth parent's educational rights. Caseworkers need to recognize these rights and if necessary, take steps to formally reassign them in order to ensure the child's educational interests are served. Caseworkers also received a resource list of advocates to turn to for support when they hit a case too difficult to handle alone.

Other Options for the Advocate

If the birth parent cannot or should not serve as the child's primary educational advocate, the caseworker should decide whether she, the foster parent, group home staff person, or some other specialist should be designated. In practice, by default, it is usually the foster parent or group home staff person who takes on this responsibility. Many caseworkers assume that is part of the foster parent's job and that he or she will know what to do and how to do it. But Safe and Smart staff found that, while many foster parents might like to serve in this role, they may have limitations that make them less effective or poor candidates. Some foster parents or group home staff have only limited education themselves and are easily awed or intimidated by the school system. Others are juggling many children in their care and do not have the resources necessary to serve as the educational advocate for every foster child. Others have not received support or encouragement – and certainly have not been held accountable – for paying attention to a foster child's educational needs. But many are capable. They simply need training, support, and encouragement. Given the right information, caseworkers can familiarize parents with the rights of foster children, include education as a topic at regular meetings with foster parents, and teach foster parents how to read report cards and attendance records. With help and training, many foster parents can become educational advocates for the children in their care.

In other situations, the caseworker will be aware that a child has special educational needs and/or that the foster parent, while perfectly capable of providing a safe home, does not have the skill necessary to serve as the child's educational advocate. In these instances, the caseworker herself – or an

educational specialist identified by the caseworker – should assume primary responsibility.

In order to encourage the designation of an educational advocate for foster children, the Vera Institute, ACS, and Family Court of the City of New York, developed a prototype for a "Checklist on Educational Status of Children in Foster Care" that can be used in any jurisdiction concerned about the education of foster children. The checklist (see attachment) asks such basic questions as: In what school and grade is the child enrolled? What services is the child receiving? What are the child's grades? How many times was the child absent or late to school? But most critically, it requires designating the "Person Chiefly Responsible for Child's Schooling" and asks for that person's name, relationship to the child, and a contact phone number. The checklist is to be completed by the caseworker at the end of each school term – or whenever a change in foster care placement occurs – and reviewed by a child welfare supervisor or Family Court judge.

The checklist, which is not yet in use, can serve as a consistent reminder that education is an integral part of placement in foster care. But absent such a formal document, the caseworker still should be encouraged to monitor the child's progress at school – either directly or through a designated educational advocate.

Attendance at Parent/Teacher Conferences

Tackling the whole relationship between education and child welfare can be intimidating, but breaking it down into smaller steps can help. In addition to designating an educational advocate for each child in foster care, child welfare staff can

take advantage of some easy points of entry into a child's school life. One obvious and non-intimidating point is parent-teacher conferences. Teachers are available on parent-teacher conference days, and many jurisdictions use these occasions to distribute and discuss report cards and attendance. Vera staff found that caseworkers desperately wanted that information (and were being held increasingly accountable for having it) but had trouble accessing it. The obvious answer was to ensure attendance by someone – the foster parent or caseworker – at the child's parent-teacher conference.

The Safe and Smart program and three private foster care agencies, that together served more than 1,000 children in care, developed a plan for increasing foster parent attendance at New York City's twice-a-year parent-teacher conferences. At the time, the agencies reported that they had put little or no emphasis on promoting attendance at the conferences.

Safe and Smart staff and senior agency staff led short, simple training sessions that encouraged caseworkers to mobilize foster parents to attend these conferences. Caseworkers received a kit with handouts that could easily be copied for foster and birth parents. The kit included a schedule of conferences at elementary, middle, and high schools; a sample report card (with guidance on how to read it), and guidelines for helping children with their homework. Recognizing that foster parents with limited education can feel intimidated by teachers and other school officials, or unsure of what information to seek, the kit also suggested seven questions they could ask at the conference including: What are my child's strengths and weaknesses? Has my child completed all required work to date? What can I do to help? The contents of the kit were printed in both English and Spanish and are easily translatable into any language.

The agencies experimented with different methods of alerting foster parents about the school conferences. Some sent flyers along with their foster payment checks; others called parents to remind them of the conferences two weeks in advance. Ideally, caseworkers would attend the parent-teacher conferences, too, but many can't even find the time to make the follow-up calls. One agency used volunteers on the phones to remind parents of the conferences and later to ask why they did or did not attend.

Each of the agencies that participated in the trainings reported a higher than usual turnout at parent-teacher conferences. The agencies surveyed a sample of their foster parent populations; those that actively encouraged attendance reported turnouts ranging from 75 percent to 93 percent. Foster parents who attended the conferences said they found it helpful to get detailed information about their children's progress and needs, both academically and behaviorally, and to learn how they could help the children with schoolwork. Working with limited resources, and with minimal effort and outreach, the agencies were able to spark an interest in improving the educational experiences of foster children among both caseworkers and foster parents.

Bridging the gap between the child welfare and educational systems serves children well. But constructing those relationships can seem like a formidable task. Starting with simple, inexpensive, and easily implemented solutions can help. The steps discussed here – designating one adult with primary responsibility for educational issues and promoting attendance at parent-teacher conferences – can help to bridge the gap and to ensure that the children's educational progress doesn't fall through the cracks.

When to Use the Checklist: This checklist should be completed at least twice each year, at the end of the fall and spring school terms. It should also be completed each time a change in placement is made.

How to Use the Checklist: A caseworker or case planner should complete the form. A supervisor or Family Court judge should check each item if the answer is satisfactory, or place an X by any item that suggests that the child's educational needs are not being met.

Who is the Person Responsible for School Contact: It may be the foster parent, the birth parent, or any other responsible adult able to review the child's school work, attend parent-teacher conferences, and help the child and teachers when problems arise. This person should be designated at the time of any placement or change in placement.

ACS/Family Court Checklist on Educational Status of Children in Foster Care

/ X

	In what school and grade is the child enrolled (not including summer school)?	School: Grade:
	In what month and year did the child enter this school?	Date:
	What enrichment, gifted, tutoring, after-school, summer school, bilingual, or special education services is the child receiving?	List services:
	What is the date of the latest report card in the child's case record?	Date:
	Based on the latest report card, how many times was the child marked late or absent in the last marking period?	Number of days late:
	In how many classes is the child doing work at grade B (80; 3-4) or better?*	Number of classes:
	In how many classes is the child doing work at grade D (65; 1-2) or lower?*	Number of classes:
	What was the date of the last parent-teacher conference, and who attended for the child?	Date: Name:

* Grading systems vary. The most common are letter grades, numerical grades from 1-100, and standards assessments from 1 to 4 (1 means "far below standards"; 4 means "exceeds the standards.")

Person Chiefly Responsible for Child's Schooling: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

Person Completing Right-hand Column: _____

Position/Agency: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

Date Completed: _____

7 *Questions to ask at Parent-Teacher Conferences*

- 1.** How is my child doing?
- 2.** What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- 3.** What are the academic standards for the grade? Is my child meeting them? If not, what can we do to help?
- 4.** Is my child experiencing any difficulty of which I should be aware? If so, what?
- 5.** Has my child completed all required work to date? What is he or she missing? Can the work be made up?
- 6.** What tools are being used to prepare my child for the standardized tests? How can we build on this at home?
- 7.** Do you think my child will meet the academic standards necessary for promotion in June? What services are available in the school to help my child? What other resources are available? What can I do to help?

7 ***Siete Preguntas para Hacer en las Conferencias de Padres-Maestros***

- 1.** ¿Cómo está haciendo mi niño?
- 2.** ¿Cuales son los puntos débiles y los fuertes de mi niño?
- 3.** ¿Cuales son las expectativas académicas del grado? ¿Cumple mi niño con ellas? De no ser así, ¿qué podemos hacer para ayudarlo?
- 4.** ¿Tiene mi niño alguna dificultad de la que yo debo enterarme? De ser así, ¿qué es?
- 5.** ¿Hasta la fecha, ha completado mi niño todos los trabajos requeridos? ¿Qué no ha el/ella entregado? ¿Se puede aun hacer el trabajo?
- 6.** ¿Qué recursos se están utilizando para prepara a mi niño para los exámenes del estado y de la ciudad? ¿Como podríamos ayudarlo en la casa?
- 7.** ¿Usted cree que mi niño cimplirá con los requisitos académicos necesarios para ser promovido en junio? ¿Cuales servicios hay disponibles en las escuela para ayudar a mi niño? ¿Cuales otros recursos hay disponibles? ¿Qué puede hacer para ayudar?

SAVE THE DATE!

Save the Date

Parent-Teacher Conferences

SPRING 2002

Please be aware of these dates for parent-teacher conferences this spring. We strongly encourage all foster parents to make arrangements to meet with their children's teachers.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Wednesday, February 27

Thursday, February 28

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Wednesday, March 13

Thursday, March 14

HIGH SCHOOL

Thursday, April 11

Friday, April 12

Be sure to check with school for exact date and times.

AusrdeDE LA FE
Guarde la Fecha!

Las Conferencias Padre-Maestro

PRIMAVERA 2002

No se olvide de las fechas de las conferencias de padre-maestro esta primavera. Alentamos fuertemente a los padres de alumnos para que hagan los arreglos para reunir con los maestros de los niños.

MEDIANO de la ESCUELA

Miércoles, 27 de Febrero

Jueves, 28 de Febrero

ELEMENTAL de la ESCUELA

Miércoles, 13 de Marzo

Jueves, 14 de Marzo

PREPARATORIO

Jueves, 11 de Abril

Viernes, 12 de Abril

Verifique la fecha y la hora precisa de las conferencias con la escuela.

How to Help Your Child With Homework

Parents play a crucial role in encouraging their children to study and learn. Here are tips on ways you can help your child:

- Teach your child to organize, prioritize, and set goals.
- Provide an environment conducive to study. Eliminate as many distractions as possible.
- Remove barriers and don't accept excuses.
- Make homework time part of the regular family routine.
- Encourage your children to do their own work. Don't let them copy (cheat) and don't do homework for them.
- Show your child how you remember and meet deadlines.
- Teach your children memory tricks.
- Let your children see how you do the homework required by your job.
- Pay attention to whether or not your child is keeping up. Check with teachers if necessary.
- Teach your child to break down big assignments into manageable tasks and take one step at a time.
- Help your child understand his/her learning style.
- To the extent possible, provide your child with the tools for study (paper, pencils, dictionary, computer, etc.)
- Discuss current events as a family.
- Practice listening skills as a family.
- Praise effort as well as results.
- Encourage your child to take risks and try new things.
- Celebrate successes; don't nit-pick or expect perfection.
- Don't threaten or offer bribes.

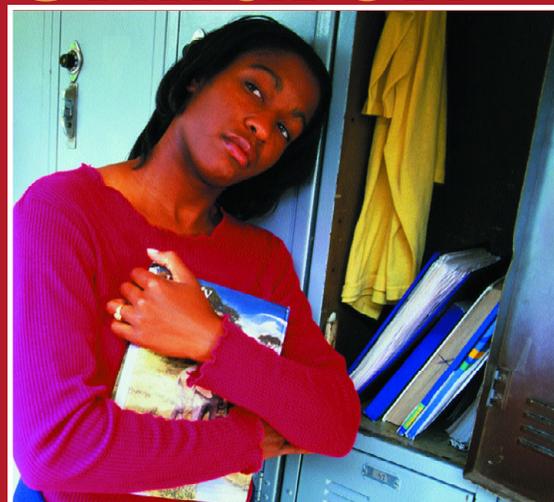
Como Ayudar a Su Niño con las Tareas

Los padres desempeñan un papel muy importante animando sus niños a estudiar y a aprender. A continuación algunas maneras de cómo ayudarlos:

- Enseñe a su niño a organizar, dar prioridad, y fijar metas.
- Provea un ambiente que conduzca al estudio. Elimine las distracciones lo más que pueda.
- Remueva los obstáculos y no acepte excusas.
- Haga la hora de hacer tareas parte de la rutina familiar.
- Anime a sus niños a hacer sus trabajos por sí mismos. No los deje copiar (hacer trampa) y no les haga sus tareas.
- Demuéstrele a su niño que usted recuerda y cumple con plazos.
- Enséñele a su niño trucos para memorizar.
- Deje que sus niños vean como usted hace el trabajo requerido por su empleo.
- Ponga atención en si su niño mantiene o no. Cheque con las maestras si es necesario.
- Enseñe a su niño a dividir tareas grandes en trabajos manejables y a tomar un paso a la vez.
- Ayude a su niño a entender su manera de aprender.
- Como le sea posible, provea a sus niño los útiles para estudiar (papeles, lápices, diccionario, etc.)
- Hable de eventos actuales como en familia.
- Practique técnicas de escuchar como en familia.
- Elogie esfuerzos, y también los resultados.
- Anime a su niño a tomar riesgos y tratar cosas nuevas.
- Celebre los triunfos, no se detenga en pequeñeces o pretenda perfecciones.
- No haga amenazas u ofrezca recompensa.

ENROLLMENT/TRANSFERS

Foster Children



& Education

A PUBLICATION OF THE VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

ENROLLMENT/TRANSFERS

A change in school is a challenging experience for any child – but for a child in foster care the challenges are even greater. All children changing schools have to adjust to new teachers and counselors, new classmates. There are new classes to attend, classes in which the curriculum may differ significantly from the previous school, and a whole new school environment to decipher. And all of that change proves even harder if the transfer occurs in the middle of a school year.

Foster Children Face Additional Burdens

For foster children, school transfers usually occur at the same time they are adjusting to a new home and new foster parents. In New York City between 1995 and 1999, some 42 percent of children changed schools within 30 days of entering foster care, according to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the city's child welfare agency. Researchers at the Vera Institute of Justice found a number of studies that cited school transfers and delays in registration as reasons why foster children are not succeeding in school. A recent study by the Child Welfare League of America suggests that it takes a child from four to six months to recover academically from the disruption of changing schools. And many children experience multiple transfers during their time in care.

These additional burdens on foster children make it especially important for caseworkers to pay attention to the question of school enrollment. Yet time pressures, high caseloads, a singular focus on safety – and often the scramble to find a bed – can make it difficult for caseworkers to think about the

impact of placement on the child's schooling. As Vera staff observed in three years of work with foster youth in New York City middle schools, caseworkers did not neglect the education of the youth under their care purposefully; most neglected education because it got lost in the process of placement and because they did not know how to negotiate the school system.

Such negotiation can be challenging. If the child is moved out of his school district, the task of registering him in a new school can prove overwhelming to whichever adult (caseworker, foster parent, group home staff person) ends up with that responsibility – and the child may miss days or weeks of school. In Vera staff's experience, most caseworkers, foster parents, and group home staff receive little or no training in how to negotiate the school system. This paper presents some tools to make that task easier.

Placing a Priority on Avoiding School Transfers

For children in care, school can be a place of stability in their otherwise chaotic lives. So the first question to ask is if placement in foster care (or reassignment to a new home within the child welfare system) really necessitates a change in school. At ACS and many child welfare agencies around the country, there is a growing preference for keeping the child in her current school – or at least in the same community school district – if possible. There are, of course, circumstances that can make school stability difficult to maintain: The child could be placed in kinship care in another part of the city, for example, or the current school may not

be able to meet her special education needs. But in general, if the child is doing well and there are no risks involved in remaining at the current school, strong consideration should be given to continuity of education. Caseworkers and other child welfare staff should be trained and encouraged to regard school transfers as undesirable. And all avenues – including transportation support to enable the child to commute to her own school – should be exhausted before embarking on a necessary school transfer.

Not all school changes result from entry into care or change of foster care residence. Transfers can occur if a child is moved because of behavior problems, is placed in a permanent home (reunited with birth parent or adopted), or ages out of the system before graduating.

A number of advocates are urging that the child be included in the decision about where he will attend school. An older child especially may have strong feelings about school choice. He may wish to remain with friends in familiar surroundings or, conversely, he may wish to make a new start in a new setting.

Simple Tools Can Facilitate Necessary School Transfers

If placement results in a change of school, there are several steps a caseworker can take to facilitate the process. A good place to start is with a simple set of tools to navigate what can be a complex education system.

The Vera Institute's Safe and Smart program, ACS, and New York City school officials produced a "Back to School" kit for use by caseworkers and foster parents that can be adapted to any school district. The kit was distributed at trainings for foster care agency caseworkers, who then shared it with co-workers and foster and birth parents.

The kit includes two letters designed to expedite the registration process. The first is addressed to school personnel and signed by a senior official of the child welfare agency. The letter, to be presented to school staff, asks for – and cites regulations that require – prompt registration of foster children. The second, addressed to superintendents and principals, is from the chancellor (top official) of the school system and emphasizes the role of timely registration in providing "every possible support and encouragement to children who are in foster care."

Together, the letters show that both the education and child welfare systems place great importance on promptly enrolling foster children in school. They also clarify which education regulations govern the registration process so as to ensure those regulations are applied fairly and consistently to foster youth. Attendees said the enrollment letter was the most useful aspect of the trainings, and several reported that the letter elicited positive responses from school staff.

The kit also contains such information as requirements for registration, a "What to Bring" list, phone numbers for key contacts in the school system, a school-year calendar, and a schedule of parent-teacher conferences. (Examples are included at the end of this report.) The "What to Bring" list helps ensure that caseworkers, foster parents, or other adult advocates arrive at the school with all of the documents necessary for registration. Caseworkers had complained to Vera staff that they spent considerable time going back and forth to school for multiple appointments. This list gives them the security of knowing they have all the materials needed to complete the registration in one trip. The other materials in the tool kit – the school schedule and the dates of parent-teacher conferences – signal that ongoing contact between child welfare staff and the school is expected.

ACS has continued the trainings and has expanded the kit to include a sample form from the foster care agency that accompanies the enrollment letter and is designed to clear up any confusion about guardianship, and a form the guardian signs that allows the school to share information about the child's educational record with ACS. These additions reflect an increased understanding of the challenges faced by education officials in dealing with foster youth. School officials told Safe and Smart staff that there were almost too many adults involved with foster youth – and they did not know who had the authority and responsibility for the child's educational needs. This confusion also spilled over to foster parents, who didn't give permission for a child to attend an after-school program, sign up for tutoring, or participate in a field trip because they assumed they lacked the authority. The guardianship clarifies which adult serves as the primary point person for the school.

Responses from attendees indicated that the training gave them the tools they needed to expedite registration and, more importantly, motivated many agency workers to become advocates for the educational needs of foster children. Once engaged, there is much more that agency workers can do. But they cannot learn it all on their own. They need access to training, materials, and experts. The Vera/ACS experience suggests that providing this necessary support need not be expensive or burdensome.

Support for Caseworkers

First, caseworkers must know the law and the requirements of the school system. Because policies and procedures vary from one locality to another – and often from one school to another – it is difficult to provide caseworkers with a universal set of rules. But knowing the local rules and regulations can be the difference between successfully enrolling a child

in school and a child missing days or weeks of education. In New York State, for example, a child must be admitted even if all required documents are not on hand. Prior to training, few New York City caseworkers knew this rule and often found themselves turned away because they lacked records – records which, given their charges' circumstances, are often difficult for them to obtain. Some educational staff did not know this rule either and unnecessarily denied admission. Giving caseworkers the appropriate school regulation – and letting them know how to use it and when to share it with school staff – went a long way to improving prompt registration of foster youth in school.

Other states recognize that foster youth present special circumstances. Some states will waive parental signatures for enrollment in special education or arrange necessary immunizations at nearby community clinics. Rachel DeAragon, education specialist at Good Shepherd Services, a New York foster care agency, says caseworkers "have to know what the requirements are – academic and others – at every point in the educational system if they are going to advocate for a kid." In the case of Good Shepherd, DeAragon serves as the expert resource for the agency's caseworkers, tutoring them on educational practice and encouraging them to advocate for the children on their caseloads.

Other Things Caseworkers Can Do:

- Decide which adult will be the point person for that child's education. (See "Adult Involvement")
- Discuss with foster parents and the child during the summer where the child will be attending school. Although never easy, transfers are less disruptive in summer or during a mid-year break.
- Find out if the school has an enrollment packet with written admission policies and share this information

with the foster parent or other designated adult.

- Know when the foster parent or other designated adult is taking the child to school and make sure that she can contact you if she encounters a problem.
- If records are missing, write to the new school asking staff to request records from the child's previous school.

Additional Complexities

Registration is even more complicated when a child who has been placed in a residential treatment center (RTC) or other institutional placement outside of the local school district returns to his home locality and needs to be re-registered in school. Some of these institutions have their own schools or enroll children in a different district – and the home district does not recognize the educational credits or understand how to translate that educational experience and place the child at the appropriate level in school upon return.

While much progress has been made in New York City to coordinate the efforts of local educational and child welfare systems, there has been little formal cooperation between the schools and the RTCs, virtually all of which are located

outside of the city. In this instance it is important to start the re-enrollment process early. It would benefit both child and school if the school had knowledge of the child's educational experience at the RTC and had access to tests and psycho-social interviews. It is also important to recognize that these cases usually require the additional support of an educational specialist or a local advocacy organization and to secure that support early in planning for the child's return. If the child has special needs, enlisting the advice and input of an expert in special education can help to improve the transition process.

The Questions are the Same

But in all cases in which a child in care is entering a new school the questions are the same: When registration problems arise, how are they addressed? And who is ultimately responsible for the child's education – the caseworker, the educational specialist, the foster parent, or the birth parent? Our experience suggests that the most important thing is to acknowledge the importance of school – and then to provide child welfare staff with some inexpensive and easy-to-use training and tools to tackle the challenge of school registration.



ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
150 WILLIAM STREET: 18TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10038

WILLIAM C. BELL
Commissioner

WHAT TO BRING WHEN REGISTERING A FOSTER CHILD FOR SCHOOL

MUST ABSOLUTELY HAVE:

1. The child

SHOULD HAVE:

(Chancellor's regulation, A-101, 1.3: "If a parent or guardian or agency social worker brings a student to school for admission without appropriate documents, the principal will admit the student...")

1. **Letter from ACS signed by Anne Williams-Isom.** A letter to the school with the non-parent's name, home address, telephone number, name(s) of parent or guardian of the student with their home address and telephone numbers, the circumstances under which the student came to reside with them, and the duration of the stay (Chancellor's Reg, A-101, 4.2.1)
2. **Proof of address:** (Chancellor's Reg, A-101, 5.1.2)
 - a. Utility bill
 - b. Or, deed to a house
 - c. Or, document from City Housing Authority or Human Resources Administration
 - d. Or, medical insurance cards
 - e. Or, statement that verifies the address from an employer, a social agency, a community based organization, or a religious institution (see letter listed in 1.)

HELPFUL TO HAVE:

1. **Certification of child's name:**
 - a. Birth certificate
 - b. Or, baptismal certificate
 - c. Or, passport
2. **Proof of Immunization:**
 - a. 4DTP's
 - b. 4 Polio
 - c. 1 MMR after 1 year old
 - d. 2nd MMR 30 days after 1st and after 15 months
3. Child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) regarding special education placement
4. Report card from previous school with school ID#
5. Attendance record from previous school with school ID#
6. Knowledge of child's previous class placement: special education, general education, gifted class
7. Name, place, and address of previous school



**ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

150 William Street
New York, NY 10038

WILLIAM C. BELL
Commissioner

ANNE WILLIAMS-ISOM
Associate Commissioner

Dear School Principal:

The below-named student is in foster care and is currently placed with the agency listed in the attached document. We are requesting that s/he be enrolled in your school as quickly as possible. The Department of Education and the Administration for Children's Services are committed to working together to ensure that all the children in foster care are getting the best education possible.

As you know, Chancellor's Regulation A-101 calls for the prompt admission of all pupils, including children in foster care. The child must be enrolled regardless of whether s/he has the required documentation, or before an investigation of her/his school history is completed. If there are any issues related to the adequacy of the documentation presented, an investigation is to be conducted after the admission has been completed.

The foster parent or agency named in the attached form has day-to-day responsibility for the care of this child. The foster parent and parent should be invited to parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and any other school business pertaining to the performance of the student. We strongly encourage you to reach out to these parties and include them in the child's educational process. In some cases, however, interaction between parent and child is either limited, or prohibited, by the court. For further clarity in these situations, school staff can refer to the attached copy of the portion of the court order which covers visitation.

ACS would like to invite staff and administrators from your school to get involved in the case conferences pertaining to the child. The case conferences, which occur at regular intervals, serve as a forum for sharing information related to the safety and protection, as well as the functioning of the child and his or her family. School staff can add a valuable perspective to these meetings and we encourage your participation.

The fact that this child is in foster care is strictly confidential and should be revealed to school staff on a need-to-know basis. We appreciate your sensitivity to this issue.

Sincerely,

Anne Williams-Isom
Associate Commissioner and Special Counsel to the Commissioner



BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

HAROLD O. LEVY, *Chancellor*

TELEPHONE: 718.935.2794

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR
110 LIVINGSTON STREET · BROOKLYN, NY 11201

FACSIMILE: 718.935.3383
E-MAIL: hlevy@nycboe.net

MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL SUPERINTENDENTS and PRINCIPALS

FROM: Harold Levy

SUBJECT: School Registration of Children in Foster Care

DATE: August 16, 2001

Regular attendance is, of course, among the most significant components of success in school. The increasing mobility of our student population has placed ever-greater importance on the capacity of our schools to facilitate the transfer and registration process. This is particularly true for students in foster care, who may be subject to more frequent changes of location and circumstance.

It is imperative that every effort be made to facilitate a smooth and efficient registration process for students who are in foster care. These youngsters will generally be accompanied for registration either by an employee of the Administration for Children's Services, by an employee of a private foster care agency, or by a foster parent. It is important that every consideration be extended in these situations, and that the student be registered as quickly as possible. If there is any question concerning documents being provided, or documents that may be missing, school staff should, in accordance with Chancellor's Regulations, immediately register the student on a provisional basis and request that follow up information be provided as promptly as possible. If the student is attempting to register in the wrong school, the student's accompanying adult should be directed to either the appropriate school or to the district office. Either way, a telephone call should first be made to the school or district office to which they are being directed, to ensure that it is the correct place and to let the office know to expect the student.

It is our goal to provide every possible support and encouragement to children who are in foster care. A warm, welcoming and efficient registration process will create a lasting impression, and help us to serve these students to the utmost of our ability.

Thank you for your cooperation concerning this important matter.

April 2003



Administration for Children's Services

DIVISION OF CHILD PROTECTION
(Insert Field Office Address)

WILLIAM C. BELL
Commissioner

ZEINAB CHAHINE
Deputy Commissioner

School-Record Release

To: _____

I authorize you to release to the Administration for Children's Services any and all records, including, but not limited to, the cumulative record folder and all its contents, all academic records, guidance reports, anecdotal records, incident reports, attendance records, immunization and health records, special education records (if any), and any other records maintained by the school; and also including any records kept by the guidance counselor.

The right of confidentiality means that you cannot share information without my consent. I fully understand that I am requesting that you share confidential information with the Administration for Children's Services. Please honor my request as quickly as possible.

Name of Child

Signature of Parent/Date

Date of Birth

Address

Send documents to: _____
Name/Title

Address

SCHOOL REGISTRATION: Where & When

First Day of School

September 5, 2001 (High School only)

September 6, 2001 (Elementary & Middle School)

ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOLS

When: Beginning August 27, 2001 and throughout the school year

Where: At the child's zoned school

HIGH SCHOOLS

When: August 27-August 31, 2001
& January 28-February 1, 2002

Where: High School Superintendent offices (designated by borough)

When: All other times of the year
8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday – Friday

Where: Office of High School Admissions
22 E. 28th Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10016

Caseworkers can copy this form on agency letterhead and give it to the adult who is registering a foster child for school.

Child: _____ DOB: _____

Student ID: _____ CIN (Medicaid #) _____

Address: _____

Previous School: _____ Current Grade: _____

Check one: General Ed _____ Special Ed _____ Gifted Program _____

Foster Care Agency _____

Caseworker/Contact: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Parent(s): _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Foster Parent(s): _____ Phone Number: _____

Date of Placement with Foster Parent: _____

Interaction with Parent (circle one): Permitted Limited Prohibited

Date of Court Order (if applicable): _____

Other Relevant Information:

