

# EDUCATING AND SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN:

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A Guide to Education  
for Children and Youth  
in DCFS Care in Illinois



## Directions for Use

This guide is intended primarily as a support reference for school personnel working with children who receive services from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Children spend a majority of their day in school, therefore, it is essential that school personnel are informed of the unique policies and procedures associated with these youth. “*EDUCATING AND SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN: A Guide to Education for Children and Youth in DCFS Care in Illinois*” provides resources, links, and other information in a user-friendly question and answer format. It also frequently cites an applicable DCFS Rule or Procedure which may assist school staff when communicating with DCFS employees about students in DCFS care. If any protocol relevant to these topics still remains unclear, please contact the Education Advisor assigned to your region (*See Appendix A*).

### **ALERT!**

We are excited about new legislation at the federal and state levels regarding educating children in foster care. With these two pieces of legislation working together along with prior work, we envision our children in care succeeding by leaps and bounds!

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama in December 2015 and has many provisions for children in care including tracking achievement and graduation rates and supporting children in their school of origin, if in their best interest.

The 99th Illinois General Assembly passed 99-0781 which amends the Illinois School Code to encourage all school districts to appoint a DCFS School Liaison by the 2017-2018 school year. This law will facilitate school enrollment of youth, build capacity and infrastructure supports, and allow school personnel to become more knowledgeable about DCFS while supporting the educational needs of our children in care. (*See Appendix B*).

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*DCFS Procedures 314, Education Services can be obtained online at:  
[www.illinois.gov/dcfs/aboutus/notices/Documents/procedures\\_314.pdf](http://www.illinois.gov/dcfs/aboutus/notices/Documents/procedures_314.pdf)*



## **Welcome Message from Director, George Sheldon**

Dear Educator,

Thank you for being invested in our children. You are critical to each child, but especially to our children in care. When children enter foster care, sometimes they are forced to change schools and can fall behind academically. This experience, coupled with other trauma in their lives, makes you one of the most important people in their lives. I cannot stress this enough. Every child needs a stable, responsible adult in their lives, a person who cares about them, someone they can trust and rely on.

When I was eight years old, I moved from New Jersey to Florida. Having to move and make new friends was hard. I was lucky to have my family and education, as it turned out, would be my rock. I was the youngest of six, and my mother worked in a school lunchroom until she was 70 years old to help put me through college. I didn't have a lot of economic advantages, but my mother devoted herself to the success of her children, taught me right from wrong, and showed me what it means to sacrifice. She also gave me my love of education. The children in our care, and your care, are also capable of this type of success.

They do not want to be labeled as foster kids. They want to be like every other child in your school. They want to feel accepted and valued. The trauma they suffered in their homes and in removal from their homes can interfere with their education success, and they may have difficulty taking advantage of educational opportunities outside the classroom.

All of this makes you very important in their lives and in their educational success. Educators like you help our children become critical thinkers and develop a joy of learning, which prepares them for success and happiness the rest of their lives. Your dedication and service to our children and teenagers in care makes a difference in their lives and in our society. Together, we can raise our children to be great people.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

George H. Sheldon

Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services



## **Welcome Message from Tiffany Gholson**

Thank you for building a partnership with DCFS so we can better support children in schools across Illinois! Research has shown that the educational well-being of children will determine their fate in the future in terms of living situation, stability, job satisfaction, and financial fortitude. Education has been proven to be one of the main factors that can predict success in later years of life despite early childhood trauma and neglect. Therefore, we know that we must

work harder, earlier, and become more focused on nurturing and supporting the educational lifespan of our youth in care from birth to college, the workplace, and beyond.

As a former school social worker as well as foster and adoptive parent, I know the importance of “collective parenting” to ensure that our children are receiving valuable educational experiences within and outside of the school walls. I also know that even though these youth are in care, they also belong to other child-serving agencies such as their schools and communities. Research and common sense has shown that merging the resources, training, and increasing the collaboration between these systems end with better results for youth. We must provide developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed practice to promote social-emotional health and encourage educational progress in all of our youth. Each child should be provided services to support literacy, critical thinking, writing, and vocational skills as well as specialized services, social-emotional support, and college prep focus, when appropriate. As mandated reporters and others who care about the educational welfare of our children, we hope this guide will help you help us to better reach our goals as we continue to work together to develop better ways to coordinate services and support!

Sincerely,

Dr. Tiffany C. Gholson, LCSW

Associate Deputy in the Office of Education and Transition Services  
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services



## **Welcome Message from Debra Dyer-Webster, Guardian Administrator**

As the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS”) Guardianship Administrator, I thank you for your dedication to the children and youth in the care of the DCFS. As the DCFS Guardian, I serve as acting custodian of each child or youth placed in the care of the Department through an order of temporary custody by a juvenile court; legal guardian of the person of each child or youth adjudicated to be an abused, neglected or dependent minor and placed in the guardianship of the Department by a juvenile court; legal guardian and custodian with power to consent to adoption of a child when parental rights have been terminated and a court so orders; and legal guardian of young adults over 18 years of age who remain in care and the juvenile court has found unable to consent on behalf of themselves.

Children and youth in DCFS care need people like you who go the extra mile for them. Together we can give them the type of education they deserve and are entitled. I am a proud product of the Chicago Public School system in Illinois—it was through that system and its dedicated teachers that laid the foundation for me to obtain several advanced degrees. I thank you for what you did for me and for your time and devotion to our children. I am always available to assist you in any manner.

Debra Dyer-Webster  
Guardianship Administrator  
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services



## **What is DCFS and Why is DCFS in My School?**

### **What is DCFS?**

DCFS is the acronym for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. According to the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA) and Children and Family Services Act, DCFS is responsible for receiving and investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect and has been designated as the single State agency for the planning and coordination of child abuse and neglect prevention programs and services.

### **Who is a DCFS Investigator?**

Illinois law, specifically ANCRA, requires DCFS to establish and maintain a “Child Protective Service Unit” consisting of certain specialized State employees of DCFS to investigate allegations of child abuse, neglect or dependency. Employees of this unit may be identified as DCP Investigators, Child Protection Investigators or DCP.

### **Who is a “Worker”?**

After a case is investigated and DCFS becomes involved with a family, a Child Welfare Specialist is assigned to monitor the case and to provide and coordinate appropriate services. This individual may be known by several names: including Child Welfare Specialist, permanency worker, follow-up worker, caseworker, case manager, private agency worker, or DCFS worker.

### **Why is DCFS in My School?**

In brief, DCFS is in your school to investigate or offer services related to the possible or actual abuse, neglect or dependency of a child. They may also be in the school to monitor or provide services for children in the care or custody of DCFS or to provide professional development to school personnel.

*Note: ANCRA supersedes any school policy and works in conjunction with the Illinois School Code.*

*Source: The Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act or ANCRA (325 ILCS 5/1).*

# Mandated Reporting

## What does the Department Division of Child Protection investigate?



They investigate allegations that youth under the age of 18 have been abused or neglected or are dependent. Child abuse can be physical (e.g. bruises or broken bones), sexual (e.g. fondling or incest), or mental (e.g. emotional injury or psychological illness). Neglect is the failure of a parent or caretaker to meet “minimal parenting” standards for providing adequate supervision, food, clothing, medical care, shelter or other basic needs. Dependency occurs

when a minor is without a legal parent, guardian or custodian.

## Who is a Mandated Reporter?

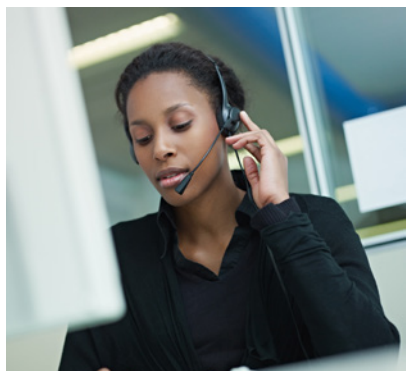
A Mandated Reporter is a person who has professional contact with vulnerable minors and is therefore legally required to ensure a report is made when abuse is observed or suspected. If you are part of school personnel, in any capacity, you are a mandated reporter. (*Abused & Neglected Child Reporting Act, 325 ILCS 5/4*)

## You are a Mandated Reporter if you are a:

**Child Care Personnel:** includes all staff at day care, pre-school or nursery school facilities, recreational or athletic program or facility personnel, early intervention providers as defined in the Early Intervention Services System Act, and foster parents.

**School Personnel:** includes administrators and certified and noncertified staff such as the superintendent, teacher, principal, school counselor, school nurse, school social worker, educational advocate assigned to a child pursuant to the School Code, assistant principal, teacher’s aide, truant officer, school psychologist, custodian and secretary, including personnel of institutions of higher education.





## **How do I report suspected abuse, neglect or dependency?**

You report immediately by calling the 24/7 DCFS Hotline:

**1-800-25-ABUSE (252-2873).**

## **What should be reported?**

The child's name, address and age, the nature of the suspected abuse or neglect, including when and where it occurred; Details are important. Make sure the written notification CANTS 5 is correctly

submitted within 48 hours of the hotline call.

*Note: Under Illinois law, a child cannot be considered neglected or abused solely because the child is not attending school.*

## **The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:**

### **If the Child:**

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes

### **Physical abuse may be present when the child:**

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

### **Neglect may be present when the child:**

- Is frequently absent from school
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather

## Reporting Rights, Responsibilities, and Questions

### **Q: When are school personnel required to contact DCFS about suspected child abuse?**

**A:** As mandated reporters, all school personnel (including administrators and both certified and non-certified staff) must contact the Department when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child who is seventeen years of age or younger and known to them in their professional capacity has been harmed or is in danger of being harmed and that a caregiver either committed the harm or should have taken steps to protect the child from harm. The call must be made immediately and no one in the workplace is permitted to prevent or delay the call. It is insufficient to make the report only to a supervisor/administrator or school nurse. Child abuse and neglect calls are made to the DCFS hotline by calling **1-800-252-2873** or **1-800-25ABUSE**.

The mandated reporter with the most direct knowledge of the suspected abuse should be the one to make the call. Having more information and details of the situation may make the difference between a report being taken or not. A mandated reporter may also notify his/her supervisor that a report has been made but it must also be noted that the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act prohibits any individual, even a supervisor, from suppressing, changing, or editing a report.

All school personnel who entered employment on or after July 1, 1986 are required by law to sign an acknowledgement of mandated reporter status prior to employment. The employer, presumably the school district, is required to retain the signed statement.

All statutes and DCFS rules regarding mandated reporting and child abuse and neglect investigations apply to both public, charter, and private schools.

*Source: ANCRA*

### **Q: What if I am not sure that abuse or neglect has occurred?**

**A:** Mandated reporters have great variance in their knowledge of child abuse and neglect and the state's legal jurisdiction to intervene and investigate a family. The law establishes a structured system where mandated reporters are expected to report any suspicion of child abuse and neglect. The DCFS hotline worker, trained in the legal criteria of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, determines whether an investigation should be conducted.

*Source: ANCRA, DCFS Manual for Mandated Reporters*

**Q: Can a DCFS Investigator interview a child without a school personnel present?**

**A:** Yes. DCFS has all authority to interview a child outside the presence of any other persons. The investigator may refuse to permit a parent, school personnel, or any other person from sitting in on an interview if he/she believes that this is appropriate. However, in most cases, the investigator welcomes school personnel in the room whom the child trusts and who can assist the child in being comfortable. In some instances, the investigator will need the presence of another professional when observing marks or injuries on a child's body.

It is very important to note that the Department needs the cooperation of school administrators and other school personnel during an interview conducted on the school premises. This is true regardless of whether the school is the reporter or the report has been made by someone else.

Note: A school district may wish to have a policy allowing a school representative to be present at the direction or request of DCFS and that school personnel would serve as a support person but would not participate as an interviewer. The school personnel must not interfere with the questions by asking, answering, or leading the child.

*Source: AN CRA*

**Q: Should the school contact anyone, such as parents, after a Hotline report is made?**

**A:** State law does not require that a school, or any other mandated reporter, notify a child's parent of a child abuse or neglect report. However, this is often an extremely difficult decision for schools. In the end, a school administrator or teacher's professional judgment and obligations under the school's policies and rules must determine whether or not the report is disclosed to a child's parent.

Note: There are several considerations when making this decision. On the side of notifying parents, some mandated reporters and investigators point to the positive effect of maintaining open communication with the parents. The parents or child may know, or guess, who made the report and the reporter may find that long-term trust will be served by being open with parents about the necessity of reporting suspicion of abuse or neglect. On the other hand, some mandated reporters and investigators suggest that notifying the parents, especially when one or both are suspected of being the perpetrator of the abuse or neglect, may increase their anxiety, leading to avoidance or hostile behavior. It may also give them time to cover up the evidence of abuse or neglect or put pressure on the children to change their stories or prevent

further disclosures. It could also lead to the possibility of retribution against the children.

A school district should consider adopting a policy which specifies that parents may not be notified if serious child abuse or neglect is suspected and if a DCFS investigator or law enforcement officer expressly requests that parents not be notified.

**Q: What is the school's role when a child has been taken into protective custody directly from school?**

**A:** A DCFS investigator has the authority to take protective custody of a child without the consent of the child's parents or the school. The Illinois School Code allows schools to withhold information from any person seeking information on a child's whereabouts when that child has been taken into protective custody as a victim of suspected child abuse or neglect. Such inquiries may be directed to DCFS or to the local law enforcement agency.

*Source: ANCRA*

**Q: Are measures taken by DCFS to prevent disruption of the school day?**

**A:** The Department will, to the fullest extent possible, conduct an investigation in such a way as minimizes disruption of the school day. School administrators should feel free to discuss concerns about school disruptions and to suggest possible alternatives with the DCFS investigator. There is a degree of flexibility in determining when interviews occur, provided that the child's safety can be ensured. Nevertheless, in cases of abuse and neglect, a child may not be focused on their studies and may feel a sense of relief that his/her problems are being attended to.

**Q: Will DCFS notify the person who made the report of its findings following an investigation?**

**A:** Mandated reporters receive a letter informing them of the finding in cases they reported. The only information contained in the letter is the finding—indicated or unfounded, and who to contact for any clarification of the contents of the letter.



### **Mandated Reporting Training:**

Within one year of initial employment and at least every 5 years thereafter, school personnel required to report child abuse must complete mandated reporter training by a provider or agency with expertise in recognizing and reporting child abuse. *Source: 325 ILCS 5/4*

This online course is designed to assist Illinois Mandated Reporters in order to understand their critical role in protecting children by recognizing and reporting child abuse. Everyone who suspects child abuse or neglect should call the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse Hotline to make a report, but Mandated Reporters are required by law to do so.

*This training can be found at <https://mr.dcfstraining.org>*



## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Foster Parents' Educational Responsibilities**

In accordance with the Foster Parent Law foster parents have a responsibility to advocate on behalf of children and youth in their care. With regard to educational services, responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School enrollment
- Giving consent for:
  - In-state field trips
  - Attendance at sporting or cultural events
  - Extracurricular/athletic activities (*Policy Guide 2015.14*)
  - Routine Social events;
- Assisting with homework as needed
- Attending parent/teacher conferences
- Picking up report cards
- Encouraging participation in extracurricular activities
- Representing the child for the purpose of special education services and attending/participating in IEP/IFSP meetings (*see Procedure 314.60 and 314.70*)
- Serving as an Educational Surrogate Parent when a child or youth receives special education services and is placed in residential treatment with a goal of returning to the foster home;

- Locating and enrolling the child in an early childhood education program, when age- appropriate
- Collaborating with the Caseworker during any transitions between schools
- Attending Truancy Adjudication Hearings, as scheduled, in conjunction with the assigned Caseworker.

*Source: Procedure 314.30 (a)*

## **The Department of Child Protection (DCP) Investigator’s Responsibilities**

When investigating an allegation of child abuse, neglect or dependency, DCFS through the DCP Investigator, is required to cooperate and seek the cooperation of all appropriate public and private agencies, including those providing education. As part of an investigation into suspected child abuse, neglect or dependency, a DCP Investigator is authorized to interview school staff and to collect information that is relevant to assessment or investigation.

*Source: 325 ILCS 5/7.4*

## **The Caseworker’s Responsibilities**

The assigned caseworker also has responsibilities to the child that involve the cooperation of the school and school personnel. The worker may need to have contact school personnel to verify information related to the child’s health, safety and welfare and may assist the foster parent or parent with enrollment.

*Source: Procedures 301, 314.80 & 315*

The caseworker is required to meet with the child’s teacher at least twice per year to discuss the child’s progress or any other school related needs the child might have.

*Source: Procedure 315.110 (l)*

The caseworker is also responsible for securing current information concerning the child’s school and progress in school, educational history, basic educational screening, and copies of the child’s Individualized Education Program.

*Source: Procedure 314.80*

## **The DCFS Guardianship Administrator's Responsibilities**

Foster parents and other caregivers are not authorized to sign consents for the following situations. Any consent signed by a foster parent or caregiver for the following is voidable. Only the DCFS Guardianship Administrator or an agent authorized to provide her signature may consent to the following:

- Discipline including suspensions, expulsions, and arrests
- Release of mental health records
- Media coverage/events
- Slide show productions
- Photographs
- Voice reproductions
- Research projects
- Field trips outside of Illinois
- Medical examinations or care
- Physical restraints. (*For DCFS policy on the use of physical restraint, refer to Part 384, Behavior Treatment in Residential Child Care Facilities.*)

The DCFS Guardianship Administrator must be contacted for other situations that require consent from a child's parent or guardian that are not included in this guide.

## **The Student's Birth Parents**

Typically, children in foster care have been removed from the custody and/or guardianship of their parents or of a legal guardian. Loss of custody and/or guardianship is not the same as the complete termination of parental rights. The school should contact the caseworker to determine the status of the parents' visitation rights. *Source: 705 ILCS 405/1-3*

If rights are not terminated and there is no order prohibiting contact, birth parents should be encouraged to participate in school activities and have the right to be invited to meetings impacting their child, especially if the goal is to return home. However, the Department maintains legal responsibility for the child.

The child's caseworker is required to provide birth parents with written notification within 10 school days of the receipt of educational progress reports and activities provided by the school.

*Source: Procedure 301 Appendix B*





## **Child Welfare Services**

**Q: How much contact can a school expect from a caseworker when a child is in substitute care placement?**

**A:** Caseworkers are expected to communicate monthly either by person or via phone with the school in order to discuss the youth's academic progress, including strengths and areas which need improvement. Caseworkers will communicate on an as needed basis with school or early childhood education program personnel to anticipate problems and maintain a positive working relationship with the child's educational/developmental program personnel. At least twice per year, the caseworker will ensure in person contact with these individuals and document all contacts. School staff should always feel free to contact the youth's caseworker, foster parent, or relative caregiver to discuss issues and concerns.

**Q: How can a school find out who a child's caseworker is?**

**A:** Children may have a DCFS caseworker or a caseworker that is employed by a private child welfare agency (POS). If you are unable to determine who the assigned caseworker is by contacting the local DCFS field office, please contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at 1-800-232-3798.

**Q: Who should the school contact when problems cannot be resolved with the foster parent or caseworker?**

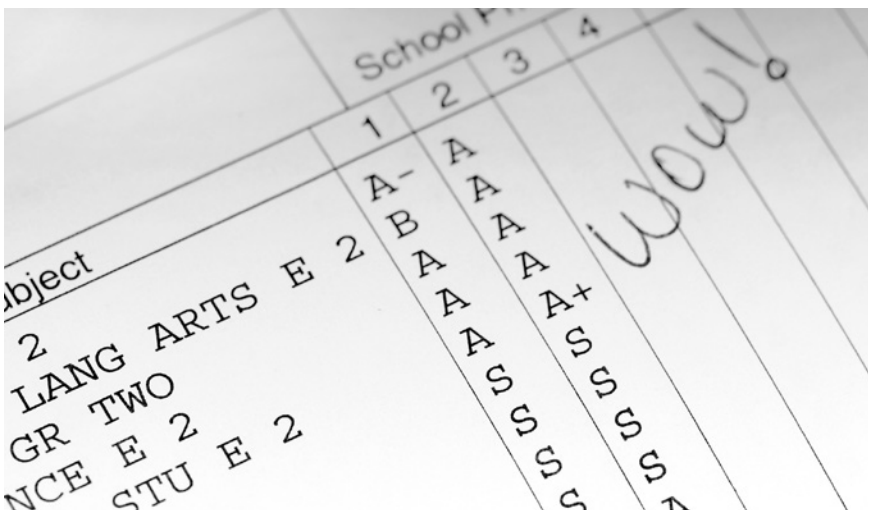
**A:** The Department has developed a network of DCFS Educational Advisors to provide assistance to caseworkers, caregivers, and schools on issues related to education. The contact information for Education Advisors can be found in Appendix A. School staff should feel free to call on these individuals when a problem is encountered and indicate attempted interventions.

**Q: How does DCFS monitor the educational progress of children in care?**

**A:** DCFS provides an educational assessment of all children entering the Department custody. This allows the assessment to be incorporated into the child's service plan which includes completing an education plan.

Children must be enrolled or re-enrolled in a school within 5 days of entering DCFS custody. The education plan is re-evaluated every six months in conjunction with the client service plan at the Administrative Case Hearing or ACR.

As caseworkers create and update the educational plan, we hope it is in conjunction with school personnel as well as the sharing of report cards, progress notes, individualized educational plans, disciplinary reports, and extracurricular notices.





**Q: What is foster care?**

**A:** Foster care is a system in which a minor has been removed from his or her home and placed into the group or private home of someone referred to as a “foster parent” or “caregiver”. The placement of the child is usually arranged through the government or a social service agency and can be for any number of reasons, none of which are the child’s fault.

**Q: Who is required to know that a student is a youth in foster care or under DCFS supervision?**

**A:** Knowledge of this information is on a need-to-know, best-interest basis; generally, only that information which relates directly to the child’s educational needs should be shared.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.30 (a)*

**Q: Do we need a release of information to talk to the investigator, caseworker, foster parent, or residential facility?**

**A:** No.

**Q: Are youth in care without permanent residency ever considered homeless?**

**A:** In some cases they are considered homeless. The McKinney Vento Act states homeless students may include children and youth who are living in emergency or transitional shelters. Per ESSA, the homeless definition no longer includes children awaiting foster care placement.

**Q: Who provides transportation to school for a child in care?**

**A:** The foster parent/guardian should make a good faith effort to provide transportation. However, the school district is ultimately responsible to ensure appropriate transportation is provided according to ESSA.

*Source: 105 ILCS 5/10-20.12b(2)(b)*

**School Enrollment and Recordkeeping**

**Q: What are the documents required for youth in care to enroll in school?**

**A:** Foster youth need the DCFS Placement/Payment Authorization form (CFS 906) in order to immediately enroll in school. All other required paperwork should be submitted as soon as possible but may include: ISBE Transfer Form, Individualized Education Program (where applicable), school transcripts, proof of health exam and immunization, eye examinations proof, and copy of birth certificate. *(See Appendix C for more information and sample of DCFS forms)*

*Source: Procedure 314.30 (a)*

**Q: How is residency defined for youth in care and is he or she able to stay in the same school, even if they reside outside the district's boundaries?**

**A:** The CFS 906 is the only document needed to establish a foster youth's residency. The school of origin for youth in care is the Illinois school district in which the child resides, whether placed by DCFS with a foster parent, a relative caregiver, or a residential facility. However, when DCFS places youth in a different school district and according to ESSA guidance around school stability, the child in care may remain in their school of origin tuition free, if it is determined to be in their best interests. Also, when a youth is placed outside of Illinois, the last school district that provided at least 45 days of educational service is the responsible district of residence.

*Source: Procedure 314.30 (b)*

**Q: Does a DCFS youth need to attend a public school or are other options available?**

**A:** A DCFS youth may enroll at a private school after consulting with their caseworker and it is determined that it is in the child's best interest. It is likely that the foster parent will be responsible for the cost of the private school. Students may be home schooled with the permission of the DCFS Guardianship Administrator, only in rare and unique circumstances.

*Source: Procedure 314.30 (b)*

**Q: Who is responsible for enrolling youth into school?**

**A:** When a child is placed in substitute care or moves to a different placement, the Permanency Worker shall discuss with the caregiver the importance of enrolling (generally within two school days) the child in school, including early childhood programming. If the caregiver indicates a problem with enrolling the child in school within two school days of placement, the Permanency Worker shall provide assistance in working with school personnel to get the child enrolled. If the child is not enrolled in school by the third school day following placement, the Permanency Worker shall take responsibility and ensure the child's enrollment in school by the fifth school day following placement. If enrollment is not forthcoming by the fifth school day, the Permanency Worker shall contact the regional education advisor for assistance. When youth are residing in a residential or group home, it is the assigned caseworker's responsibility to enroll the youth.

*Source: [https://www.illinois.gov/dcfs/brighterfutures/independence/Documents/School\\_Enrollment\\_and\\_Placement\\_Guidance\\_7-2015.pdf](https://www.illinois.gov/dcfs/brighterfutures/independence/Documents/School_Enrollment_and_Placement_Guidance_7-2015.pdf)*

**Q: What if a current IEP is not available upon enrollment?**

**A:** Enrollment of the foster care youth should not be delayed even if their IEP is not yet available. The only requirement on the day of enrollment is the CFS 906. The school should work immediately on obtaining the records from the youth's previous school. If the IEP is available at the time of enrollment, the IEP should be adopted and implemented if the foster or education surrogate parent indicates satisfaction that the current IEP and new district deems appropriate. If it is not, then an IEP meeting shall be scheduled and parental notice must be given within ten days of enrollment to develop a new IEP. During this time, the current IEP must be implemented.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.80 (a)(2)*

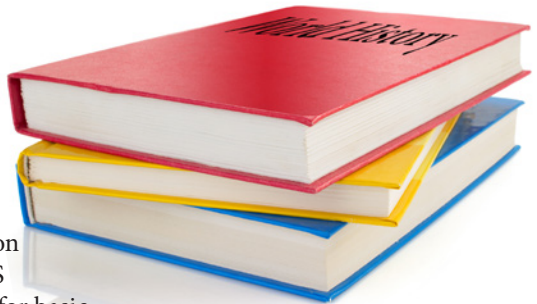
**Q: So can a youth be denied enrollment or not?**

**A:** The answer is YES – under specific conditions. For example: a school or district may deny enrollment to a student who is 17 or older for a semester for failure to meet minimum academic or attendance standards under certain conditions. Also, expulsion is one of the reasons for denial of enrollment that our children and youth face. Based on the Illinois School Code, a school district may adopt a policy that if a student is suspended or expelled for any reason from any public or private school in this or any other state, the student must complete the entire term of the suspension or expulsion before being admitted into the school district.

**Fees and Waivers**

**Q: Who pays for school textbooks and supplies for youth in care?**

**A:** Illinois school districts are required to provide free use of required textbooks and instruction materials for youth in care. DCFS pays a flat fee to assist caregivers for basic school supplies for each youth in care each year.



*Source: Procedures 314.100 (a)*

**Q: Are youth in care eligible for the National School Lunch Program?**

**A:** Yes, all youth in care are eligible for the program. Upon enrollment, the DCFS Placement/Payment Authorization form must be completed and submitted by DCFS.

*Source: <http://www.isbe.net/pdf/guidance-DCFS-ISBE.pdf>*

**Q: Are youth in care eligible for school fee waivers?**

**A:** Many schools will waive the school fees. However, if the school will not waive the fees then DCFS will make payment for those school fees.

*Source: Procedure 314.100 (a)*

**Q: If a youth in care needs tutoring, will DCFS pay for that?**

**A:** DCFS may cover payments for necessary tutoring for foster children. For example, if the school recommends tutoring, the foster youth is failing one or more classes, or performing at below grade level, the Department shall

pay tutoring services only after all other resources (e.g., in-school tutoring, teacher support, volunteers) have been exhausted. As a note, schools are not mandated to provide tutoring for DCFS youth unless specified by an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for children receiving special education services.

Source: Procedure 314.30 (j) Procedure 359.75 (l)

**Q: Who pays for extracurricular and field trips for youth in care?**

**A:** When all students are being charged a fee to go on an extracurricular or field trips, the schools are not responsible for waiving the fee for youth in care. However, DCFS funding may be available to assist with extracurricular and field trip expenses for youth in care. Contact caseworker to apply for this type of assistance.

Source: Procedures 359.75 (j)

**Q: Who pays for high school graduation expenses for youth in care?**

**A:** DCFS funding is available to assist with high school graduation expenses for youth in care.

Source: Procedures 359.75 (i)

**Academic Planning**

Academic Planning is critical in the life of a youth in care. Tracking a student’s progress and helping them set their goals for the future creates a supportive educational environment. Youth in care should also be encouraged to participate in the same type of school extracurricular activities and athletics as their peers. School personnel, caseworkers, and caregivers should collaborate to provide any necessary accommodations to allow participation.

See DCFS Procedure 314.30(h) for more information.

**Q: What is an educational plan and how should I assist in completing one?**

**A:** Youth in care need to have an educational plan in place per DCFS policy and procedure. The caseworker has the primary responsibility for completing the



educational plan for each child as part of the Family Service Plan with support from school personnel. For required contents of the plan, see Procedure 514.50(c) and for a sample of the academic plans, see the Appendix C.

*Source: Procedure 314.40 (a), 314.50 (a);*

**Q: How often should the High School Academic Plan be updated?**

**A:** Any youth of high school age must have an Annual High School Plan completed in August and October of each high school academic year. The Annual High School Plan provides DCFS a method of planning for high school graduation and post-secondary goals.

*Source: Procedure 314.30 (h)*

*Note: School personnel should assist caseworkers with the above tasks, when asked.*

**Q: Are there limits to youth in care and their technology use?**

**A:** No. They should be treated like all other youth. The Department recently passed legislation that will make it easier for kids in foster care to participate in activities with permission from their foster parents. Currently, those things require approval from the department. This sense of “normalcy” would apply to computer and technology use as well.



**Attendance and Discipline**

**Q: Are youth in care expected to attend school daily?**

**A:** Yes, poor school attendance can lead to lower academic performance. School personnel should monitor attendance closely and inform the caseworker promptly so that problems can be identified and resolved. Caseworkers shall also work with caregivers to ensure that children and youth are attending



school daily. Caseworkers should work diligently with caregivers and school personnel to obtain support for any child or youth missing extended periods of school. Truancy must be tracked and addressed by the caseworker with involvement of the caregiver and school personnel.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.30 (a)*

**Q: What are acceptable excused absences for youth in care?**

**A:** Acceptable excuses for absences may include: debilitating illness, contagious disease or injury, to attend medical and dental appointments, funerals, to attend administrative case reviews and court hearings, or for visits with parents and/or siblings on rare occasions. Unacceptable absences would include lack of transportation or as a form of punishment. If a youth does not have transportation to school, the caseworker should contact the school district to coordinate travel. If the school district is unable to provide transportation, the caseworker should work with the caregiver to come up with an alternative plan.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.30 (a)*

**Q: How should classroom teachers address inappropriate behavior, habitual absences, or trancies from youth in care?**

**A:** Teachers should discipline youth in care as they normally would discipline any student. For minor disciplinary incidents (that do not result in suspension or possible expulsion), the foster caregiver and/or caseworker should be informed as soon as possible.

**Q: Can a DCFS youth who has been referred for special education services be suspended or expelled?**

**A:** Yes, but special education students are afforded certain additional procedural safeguards under state and federal law. Youth in DCFS care with special education eligibility have the same rights with respect to school discipline as any other special education student. Contact the caseworker/ foster parent and educational surrogate parent if this happens.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.30 (a)*

**Q: If a youth in care is arrested or being suspended pending expulsion, who do I contact?**

**A:** You should contact The Office of the Guardian Administrator immediately by faxing the written report to the Office of the Guardian, School Discipline Division at 312-793-3546 as well as immediately notifying the caseworker/ foster parent.

When a student is in foster care with DCFS, the DCFS Guardianship Administrator (not the foster parent, not the caseworker, not the GAL or attorney for the minor) is that student's custodian and/or guardian. The responsibilities and authority of the legal guardian are specified in the Illinois Juvenile Court Act and include the authority to act in the minor's best interests, to make decisions of substantial legal significance and the responsibility to provide the minor with an education.

*705 ILCS 405/1-3() & ((9)*

In addition, recent Changes to the Illinois School Code from PA 099-0456 require that on or before September 15, 2016, each elementary and secondary school and charter must adopt pupil discipline policies that 1) eliminate the use of zero tolerance policies *105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b)-10*, 2) that provide academic support for students suspended four or more days (b)-25 and 3) that enable suspended students to have the opportunity to make up work for equivalent academic credit (b)-30. Of course, these changes also apply to students who are also in DCFS care.

### **Q: What is the Guardian's role concerning discipline?**

**A:** The DCFS Guardianship Administrator, as the legal custodian or guardian of all youth in DCFS foster care, is entitled to notice whenever a youth in care is suspended or faces expulsion. *105 ILCS 5/10-22.6* The DCFS Guardianship Administrator should also be notified prior to any police questioning or arrest of a student who is in foster care. Illinois law requires that the DCFS Guardianship Administrator must be provided with immediate notice of every youth in care who is suspended *105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b)* and formal written notice of any youth in care who faces expulsion. *105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(a)*

### **Q: What documentation is required for school personnel to complete when reporting a DCFS foster youth's school discipline?**

**A:** School personnel must understand that while the foster parent and caseworker may be more visible within a school, neither of these individuals has the authority of DCFS Guardianship Administrator. Therefore, while school personnel are required to complete the same documentation, provide the same notification and comply with all the changes to the Illinois School Code, in addition to contacting a student's foster parent/caseworker about a school discipline issue, school personnel must contact the DCFS Guardianship Administrator or specified designee as well.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.30 (a)*



## **Special Education Services**

Youth in care are entitled to the same services and protections as other children. No youth should be categorized as needing special education services unless a completed evaluation, as specified by federal and state laws, demonstrates the need for special education services.

*See Procedure 314.60 for more information.*

### **Q: Who can request an initial special education evaluation?**

**A:** As soon as the need is identified, a caregiver, caseworker, or school personnel can request (in writing) an initial special education evaluation or an update to the IEP. A special education evaluation can only take place with the consent of the foster parent or educational surrogate parent.

*Source: Procedure 314.60 (b)*

### **Q: Which students are assigned an Educational Surrogate Parent and when can one be requested?**

**A:** Only youth in congregate care (residential and group homes) who are eligible (or suspected of being eligible) for special education under IDEA are appointed an educational surrogate. Staff at residential facilities are required to contact ISBE to request the educational surrogate appointment. Also, the court may appoint the youth's parents or someone else as the educational surrogate parent.

Otherwise, foster parents represent children in their home as “parent” on special education matters—though they do not need to be appointed. The Educational Surrogate's authority extends only to matters under IDEA, not to all school issues.

Educational surrogates are responsible for giving consent for the following:

- Initial special education evaluation
- Initial special education services
- Special education re-evaluation
- Special education records for student, including linkages for transition services
- Inviting representatives of any participating agency who is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.60 (b)*

**Q: When do caseworkers need to be invited to IEP meetings?**

**A:** Caseworkers should always be invited to IEP meetings.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.60 (d)*

**Q: What is the time line for an initial special education evaluation?**

**A:** The school has 14 school days from the date of receiving the written referral to determine if an evaluation is needed and 60 school days after receiving the consent to complete the evaluation, hold an eligibility review meeting, and develop an IEP.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.60 (b)*

**Q: What if there was documentation that an initial special education evaluation was started but never completed?**

**A:** The receiving school district must contact the previous district and obtain the records and complete testing and the eligibility review. If no paperwork is obtained within ten days, then the receiving school can schedule a domain meeting and complete testing and evaluation. An exception to the normal 60 school day time line for initial evaluations may be waived if the new school district is making sufficient progress in completion of the evaluation and the Educational Surrogate Parent agrees to a new time of completion.

**Q: Who gives consent for initial special education evaluation, initial placement, re-evaluation, and records release?**

**A:** The foster parent gives consent for special education evaluations for students in foster homes, while the educational surrogate parent gives consent for special education evaluations for students in residential treatment.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.60 (b)*



**Q: Will special education teachers be notified of their students in foster care?**

**A:** Foster parents are required to share any information about their foster child that is educationally relevant. If the foster parent or case worker feels that any information is important to receiving appropriate services, then they may share it with appropriate school staff that needs to know basis. However, information can only be shared as allowed by DCFS Confidentiality Rule and Procedure 431.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.60 (d)*

**Q: What are the responsibilities of the school district when a youth in care with an IEP transfers out?**

**A:** The sending school has the responsibility of filing an ISBE Student Transfer form (ISBE 33-78) and having it sent to the new school district. Also, the sending school has ten days from the date of the transfer request from DCFS or the new school district to have all important records sent over as well. This ensures that appropriate placement, services, and academic instruction are provided. ESSA legislation supports prompt transferring and enrollment of records to support school stability for all of our youth in care.

*Source: Procedure 314.60 (a)*



## **Mental Health, Health, and Support Services**

### **Q: What is the school's role in supporting DCFS youth's mental health?**

**A:** Mental health records, including the mental health records of minors in DCFS care, are legally protected. Proper consent for release of information forms **MUST** be signed to ensure that mental health information and resources can be shared. Neither the minor's foster parent nor his or her caseworker has the right to release these records without proper authorization. Consent for the release of mental health records for a youth in care may require the DCFS Guardianship Administrator's signature, the signature of the minor, both signatures, or a court order.

*Source: DCFS Procedure 314.30 (e)*

### **Q: What is the school's role in supporting DCFS youth with medical conditions?**

**A:** School personnel must follow the procedures outlined in the child's 504 Plan. If no 504 Plan is available or deemed not necessary, then schools must ensure administration of medication meets certain requirements and a management plan is established between school personnel and DCFS. If administration is to be done by the child, then a written statement must be given to the school from the child's primary care physician. The note shall contain the name and purpose of the medication; the prescribed dosage; and the time(s) at which or the special circumstances under which the medication is to be administered. Otherwise, they should be treated like all other students with medical conditions.

*Source: Procedure 314.30 (e)*

### **Q: Is there anything we need to know how to support youth in care who are also pregnant?**

**A:** We have the Teen Parenting Services Network (TPSN) and provide additional support to parents and expecting parents including a home visiting program, assessments, resources, supplies, and additional supports. If you are aware of a youth who may need these additional supports, please contact the caseworker to ensure communication between the Department and the school is in place.

## **Appendices and Additional Resources**

**Appendix A:** Contact Information for Regional Education Advisors

**Appendix B:** DCFS Liaisons/ESSA/LEA Point of Contact Information

**Appendix C:** Required School Forms

**Appendix D:** School Readiness Information (Age 3-5)

**Appendix E:** Post-Secondary Resources

**Appendix F:** Statewide Provider Database

**Appendix G:** Words and Phrases to Know



## Appendix A

### Contact Information for Regional Education Advisors

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#### Education Advisor

#### Areas and Counties Covered

**Cook North** (Chicago & Suburbs)  
**Donnis Briscoe**  
 312-328-2551  
 312-328-2166 (fax)  
[dbriscoe@illinois.gov](mailto:dbriscoe@illinois.gov)  
 DCFS, 1911 S. Indiana  
 Chicago, IL 60616

Chicago, Arlington Heights, Barrington Hills, Bartlett, Bensenville, Des Plaines, Elgin, Elk Grove Village, Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Golf, Hanover Park, Harwood Heights, Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Kenilworth, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Mount Prospect, Niles, North Brook, Northfield, Norridge, Palatine, Park Ridge, Prospect Heights, Rolling Meadows, Rosemont, Schaumburg, Skokie, Streamwood, South Barrington, Wheeling, Wilmette, Winnetka

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**Cook Central** (Chicago & Suburbs)  
**Yasmina Sefiane**  
 708-338-6641  
 708-338-6671 (fax)  
[yasmina.sefiane@illinois.gov](mailto:yasmina.sefiane@illinois.gov)  
 DCFS, 1701 S. 1st Ave.  
 Maywood, IL 60153

Chicago, Bedford Park, Bellwood, Berkley, Berwyn, Bridgeview, Broadview, Brookfield, Burbank, Cicero, Countryside, Elmwood Park, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Hillside, Hodgkins, Indian Head Park, Justice, LaGrange Park, Lyons, Maywood, Melrose Park, McCook, Northlake, North Riverside, Oak Park, River Forest, River Grove, Riverside, Schiller Park, Stickney, Summit, Westchester, Western Springs

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**Cook South** (Chicago & Suburbs)  
**Arlecia Brown**  
 773-371-6479  
 773-371-6043 (fax)  
[arlecia.brown@illinois.gov](mailto:arlecia.brown@illinois.gov)  
 DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald Dr.  
 Chicago, IL 60621

Chicago, Alsip, Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet Park, Chicago Ridge, Crestwood, Dixmoor, Dolton, Evergreen Park, Hickory Hills, Hometown, Lemont, Merionette Park, Midlothian, Oak Lawn, Orland Park, Palos Heights, Palos Park, Phoenix, Posen, Riverdale, Robbins, Willow Springs, Worth



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**Cook South** (Suburbs)**Diane Fitzhugh**

708-210-3050

708-210-3729 (fax)

[diane.fitzhugh@illinois.gov](mailto:diane.fitzhugh@illinois.gov)

DCFS, 15115 S. Dixie Hwy.

Harvey, IL 60426

Calumet City, Chicago Heights,

Country Club Hills, East Hazel Crest, Flossmoor,

Ford Heights, Glenwood, Harvey, Hazel Crest,

Homewood, Lansing, Lynwood, Matteson,

Markham, Oak Forest, Olympia Fields,

Park Forest, Richton Park, Sauk Village,

South Chicago Heights, South Holland,

Thornton, Tinley Park

---

**Northern Region** (Rockford & Aurora Sub-Regions)**Aundrea Nabors**

815-967-3750

DCFS, 200 S. Wyman, Suite 201

Rockford, IL 61101

Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Du Page, Grundy,

Jo Davies, Kane, Kendall, Lake, Lee, McHenry,

Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside, Winnebago

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**Northern Region** (Part of Aurora Sub-Region)**Diane Fitzhugh**

708-210-3050

708-210-3729 (fax)

[diane.fitzhugh@illinois.gov](mailto:diane.fitzhugh@illinois.gov)

DCFS, 15115 S. Dixie Hwy.

Harvey, IL 60426

Kankakee, Will

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**Central Region** (Champaign Sub-Region)**Ann Wells**

217-875-6797

217-875-6565 (fax)

[ann.s.wells@illinois.gov](mailto:ann.s.wells@illinois.gov)

DCFS, 2900 N. Oakland Ave.

Decatur, IL 62526

Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Dewitt,

Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston,

Macon, McLean, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby,

Vermillion

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**Central Region** (Peoria and Springfield Sub-Region)**Mary Chepulis**[mary.chepulis@illinois.gov](mailto:mary.chepulis@illinois.gov)

309-671-7952 (Peoria)

309-671-7946 (Peoria fax)

DCFS, 2001 NE Jefferson St.

Peoria, IL 61603

217-557-3985 (Springfield)

217-557-5543 (Springfield fax)

DCFS, 1124 N. Walnut St.

Springfield, IL 62702

Adams, Brown, Bureau, Calhoun, Cass, Christian

Fulton, Greene, Hancock, Henderson, Henry,

Jersey, Knox, LaSalle, Logan, Macoupin, Marshall,

Mason, McDonough, Menard, Mercer,

Montgomery, Morgan, Pike, Peoria, Putnam,

Rock Island, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Stark,

Tazewell, Warren, Woodford

**Southern Region (East St. Louis and Marion Sub-Regions)**

**Bessie Peabody**

618-583-2125

618-583-2141 (fax)

[bessie.peabody@illinois.gov](mailto:bessie.peabody@illinois.gov)

DCFS, 10 Collinsville Ave.

East St. Louis, IL 62201

Alexander, Bond, Clay, Clinton, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Franklin, Hamilton, Hardin, Galatin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Marion, Jasper, Jefferson, Lawrence, Madison, Monroe, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Randolph, Saline, Union, White, Williamson Richland, Saline, St. Clair, Union, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, White, Williamson

CFS 407-6 8/2015		State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services	
<b>NIU Educational Access Project for DCFS Referral Form for Education Assistance</b>			
<b>Referral Source Information</b>			
Name:		Date:	
Email:		Phone:	
Agency/Region or School/District:			
<b>Student Information</b>			
Name:		DCFS ID:	
D.O.B.:	Gender: --PLEASE SELECT--	Ethnicity: --PLEASE SELECT--	
Race: --PLEASE SELECT--	Primary Language: --PLEASE SELECT--		
Placement: --PLEASE SELECT--			
Caregiver:		Phone:	
Address:			
Caseworker:		Phone:	
Caseworker Agency:		Phone:	
<b>Student School Information</b>			
School Name:		Grade:	
School Contact:			
Email:		Phone:	
Education Program --PLEASE SELECT--		If Other, Specify:	
<b>Please explain the primary educational problem:</b>			
<b>For Office Use Only</b>			
Date Received:		Date Acknowledged:	
Staff/Comments:			

*CFS407-6  
NIU Educational Access  
Project for DCFS  
Referral Form for Education  
Assistance*



## Appendix B

### **DCFS Liaison/ESSA/LEA Point of Contact Information**

The DCFS Liaison legislation supports the collaboration between schools and child welfare agencies in Illinois. HB 4996 was widely supported in both the House and the Senate and was signed into law by Governor Rauner on August 23, 2016 and is now PA 99-0781.

PA 99-0781 encourages each school board may appoint at least one employee to: act as a liaison to facilitate the enrollment and transfer of records of students in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services when enrolling in or changing schools. The school board may appoint any employee of the school district who is licensed under Article 21B of this Code to act as a liaison; however, employees who meet any of the following criteria must be prioritized for appointment:

1. Employees who have worked with mobile student populations or students in foster care.
2. Employees who are familiar with enrollment, record transfers, existing community services, and student support services.
3. Employees who serve as a high-level administrator.
4. Employees who are counselors or have experience with student counseling.
5. Employees who are knowledgeable on child welfare policies.
6. Employees who serve as a school social worker.

Liaisons under this section are encouraged to build capacity and infrastructure within their school district to support students in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services. Liaison responsibilities may include the following:

1. streamlining the enrollment processes for students in foster care;
2. implementing student data tracking and monitoring mechanisms;
3. ensuring that students in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services receive all school nutrition and meal programs available;
4. coordinating student withdrawal from a school, record transfers, and credit recovery;
5. becoming experts on the foster care system and State laws and policies in place that support children under the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services;
6. coordinating with child welfare partners;
7. providing foster care-related information and training to the school district;
8. working with the Department of Children and Family Services to help students maintain their school placement, if appropriate;
9. reviewing student schedules to ensure that students are on track to graduate;
10. encouraging a successful transition into adulthood and post-secondary opportunities;
11. encouraging involvement in extracurricular activities; and
12. knowing what support is available within the school district and community for students in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services.

A school district is encouraged to designate a liaison by the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. Individuals licensed under Article 21B of this Code acting as a liaison under this Section shall perform the duties of a liaison in addition to existing contractual obligations.

Federal legislation also supports this work. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and to the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA) assist in transfer/enrollment/support of our youth in care and supporting positive education outcomes for youth in care. Having state legislation support federal mandates will increase the educational support for foster care children in Illinois.

Though the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA) recognizes a need to support the relationship between child welfare and education for foster care children and the impact of educational instability, there were still gaps in implementation. In the past, these efforts were usually done by individual caseworkers and school personnel who understood the need and focused on these issues. PA 99-0781 will help close that gap and support the work on a systemic level.

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The ESSA builds upon the critical work States and local educational agencies (LEAs) have implemented over the last few years. The reauthorized law prioritizes excellence and equity for our students and supports great educators. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and amended the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Within the new legislation are core protections for school stability and school access for foster care children through a statutory vehicle that is separate from the McKinney-Vento Act, and that outlines clear, distinct, and appropriate responsibilities for both the education and child welfare agencies that includes a point person within ISBE, every local school system, and one within DCFS as well as other mandates (NAECY, 2015). The majority of the law does not take effect until 2017-18.



## Appendix C

### Required School Forms

The DCFS Placement/Payment Authorization form (CFS 906) is required at the time of enrollment. Other education form samples are included as well.

The following forms are needed as specified:

- DCFS Placement/Payment Authorization form (CFS 906); submitted immediately
- School transcripts; submitted as soon as possible
- ISBE Student Transfer Form (ISBE 33-78); submitted as soon as possible
  - Only required for any student moving out of the school district
- Medical card; submitted as soon as possible
  - Not required. However, case workers and caregivers must cooperate with school personnel by providing medical card upon enrollment
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) form; submitted as soon as possible
  - Only required for special education students
- Proof of health exam and immunizations (Health Passport); submitted by Oct. 15th of the new school year
  - Required for DCFS youth entering kindergarten or first grade, sixth grade and ninth grade
- Eye Examination; submitted by Oct. 15th of the new school year
  - Only required if DCFS youth is enrolling in a new school district, or in kindergarten
- Certified copy of birth certificate; submitted within 30 days of enrollment

*For More Information see Procedure 314.30 (a)*  
<http://www.isbe.net/pdf/guidance-DCFS-ISBE.pdf>



**WRITTEN CONFIRMATION OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT REPORT:  
MANDATED REPORTERS**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ABOUT: \_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you are reporting more than one child from the same family please list their names and birth date in the space provided on the reverse side of this form.

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Custodian: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different than the child's address) \_\_\_\_\_

This is to confirm my oral report of \_\_\_\_\_ made in accordance with the Abuse and Neglected Child reporting Act (325 ILCS 5 et seq). Please answer the following questions. (If you need more space, use the back of this page.)

1. What injuries or signs of abuse/neglect are there?
2. How and approximately when did the abuse/neglect occur and how did you become aware of the abuse/neglect?
3. Had there been evidence of abuse/neglect before now?  Yes  No
4. If the answer to question 3 is "yes," please explain the nature of the abuse/neglect.
5. Names and addresses of other persons who may be willing to provide information about this case.
6. Your relationship to child(ren)
7. Reporter Action Recommended or Taken:

PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE:

- I saw the child(ren)  
 I heard about the child(ren) From whom? \_\_\_\_\_  
 I have  have not told the child's family of my concern and of my report to the Department.  
 I am  willing  NOT willing to tell the child's family of my concern and of my report to the Department.  
 I believe  do NOT believe the child is in immediate physical danger.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name Printed) \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Title) \_\_\_\_\_ (Organization/Agency)

**INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE SIDE**

*CANTS 5  
Written Confirmation of  
Suspected Child Abuse/  
Neglect Report:  
Mandated Reporters*

**Annual High School Academic Plan**

**Identifying Information**

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID# \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_  
Case Worker \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone# \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone# \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency/Facility \_\_\_\_\_ Region/Site/Field \_\_\_\_\_

**School Information**

School \_\_\_\_\_ School Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ (Name)  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ HEP (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_ Disability (Y/N) (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
Semester GPA \_\_\_\_\_ Cumulative GPA \_\_\_\_\_  
High School Credits (Attach print out) \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Does youth have a 504 Plan (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_  
Is the youth receiving tutoring services (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, for which subjects and when \_\_\_\_\_  
Has youth taken the ACT/SAT (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, indicate highest score(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
If no, state reason \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Interest/Goals**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Strengths**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Challenges/Behaviors** (Specify type and frequency of behaviors which impact youth's learning)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Extra Curricular Activities/Resources** (For example, counseling or mentor services)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Service/Resource Recommendations**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Post Secondary Plan** (Youth's plan after high school graduation)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*CFS 407-HS  
Annual High School  
Academic Plan*



## Appendix D

### School Readiness Information (Age 3-5)

The Department is committed to providing all children involved with the Department with options for quality early childhood education. This includes children in placement, children in intact families, and children of youth in care, options for quality early education. Early childhood educational programs include five general categories:

#### Head Start/Early Head Start

Head Start is a child and family development program for low-income families with children aged birth to 5, including children with disabilities/special needs. All children for whom DCFS is legally responsible qualify for Head Start and the services are free.

Local Head Start programs offer early childhood development, health, dental, mental health, nutrition and social services, as well as meaningful parent involvement, parent training and education, and comprehensive case management.

*For Head Start Program sites statewide, visit [www.ilheadstart.org](http://www.ilheadstart.org)*

*For More Information See Procedure 314.70(a)*

#### Pre-Kindergarten Programs

The Illinois State Board of Education's Prekindergarten (PreK) At Risk Initiative is an educational program delivered in local school districts and community based organizations. All children for whom DCFS is legally responsible qualify for State Pre- Kindergarten, and the services are free. Generally, PreK programs do not provide family support, social or health services to children, but they may collaborate with agencies that do.

*For more information on the Illinois PreK program, visit [www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net).*

*For information on local PreK services, contact the local school district.*

*For More Information See Procedure 314.70(b)*

#### Accredited Child Care Programs

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is funded in local centers and homes statewide. If a child is in care, s/he does not automatically qualify for the DHS Child Care Assistance Program, but an accredited child care program could be an educational option if the child's foster parents work or if no Head Start or state Pre-K options are available.

*For More Information See Procedure 314.70(c)*



### **Early Intervention Services (For Infants and Toddlers With Developmental Delays)**

Early intervention (EI) provides a wide range of developmental and therapeutic services for children, birth to three years of age, who are experiencing at least a 30% developmental delay or have a condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay. This service is paid for with the child's Medicaid card.

*For More Information See Procedure 314.70(d)*

### **Early Childhood Special Education Programs (For Children Aged 3 – 5 Years)**

Early childhood special education services are provided by local school districts to children ages 3-5 that meets specific eligibility criteria. Youth in care who meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Procedure 314.60(a) may be eligible for early childhood special education services.

*For More Information See Procedure 314.70(e)*

## Appendix E

### Post-Secondary Resources

Youth in care of DCFS are eligible for financial aid awards based on their income. They are also eligible for the following programs. If the Annual High School Education Plan indicates an interest and/or propensity to college, DCFS personnel should discuss this with school personnel.

#### Community College Payment Program (CCPP)

Youth in care enrolling in an Illinois community college are eligible to have their “in district” tuition, fees, required books, supplies and equipment paid by the Department if they cannot be paid through Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), or Monetary Award Program (MAP) Grant. These payments are made directly to the community college.

New legislation now allows youth in care to be considered residents of the community college district without meeting the 30-day residency requirement of the district if they are currently residing in the district. The youth or youth’s caseworker should provide the community college with proof of current in-district residency, if requested by the college.

The program does not pay “out of district” tuition, if classes were dropped or not completed, if there are charges for items that were not required for the coursework on the student’s schedule, or if there were previous fiscal year charges.

*For more information on this program see: Procedure 314.75(a)*

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=09900SB0232enr&GA=99&SessionId=88&DocTypeId=SB&LegID=84193&DocNum=232&GAID=13&Session>

#### Education and Training Voucher Program

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program provides financial support services to eligible youth in care that are enrolled in an accredited college, university or vocational program. Youth approved for the ETV Program are eligible for up to \$5,000 per state fiscal year to pay for costs of attendance at an accredited post-secondary education institution. They must access this funding prior to their 21st birthday. All youth in care planning on attending college, must complete a FAFSA application every year. *(It is needed for all DCFS programs.)*

*For more information on this program see: Procedure 314.75(b)*



## **Youth in College (YIC)/Vocational Training Program**

The Youth in College/Vocational Training (YIC/VT) Program is a placement for youth in care who are enrolled and attending an accredited college, university or vocational program full-time. Youth approved for this program receive financial and supplemental support services including a monthly board payment and a start-up payment to assist with initial school expenses.

*For more information on this program see: Procedure 314.75(c)*

## **Youth in Scholarship (YIS) Program**

This program awards college scholarships to at least 53 youth each year for youth who are currently in care, emancipated from care or who have found permanent loving homes through adoption or guardianship. The scholarship provides a tuition and mandatory fee waiver to an Illinois public university or the student's local community college, a monthly board payment, payment for required textbooks that are not covered by financial aid grants, and the Illinois medical card.

*For More Information see Procedures 312*

## **Special Circumstances for Undocumented Youth**

**Q: What if a youth in care is an undocumented student who wants to apply to college?**

**A:** We should encourage them while understanding their special circumstances. Only US citizens, naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, and certain types of refugees can apply for FAFSA. If any undocumented student applies for FAFSA, it will automatically get a red flag because they need to provide a valid social security number; if they are legal permanent residents, they need to provide Alien #.

Students that apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) benefits, will get assigned a valid social security number and a working permit. Under no circumstances should they apply for FAFSA. Now, there may be some institutions that ask students to submit FAFSA and in those instances, the paper application should be submitted directly to the institution and not to FAFSA.

**Q: What is Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)?**

**A:** In 2012, President Obama sent an Executive Memo to Homeland Security which enabled individuals that met certain conditions to receive deferral from deportation and a work permit, along with a social security number valid for work purposes. This is not a path to US permanent residency.

<http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>

**Q: If a student is born in the US (US citizen) but his/her parents are undocumented, can they still receive financial aid.**

**A:** Yes, all US citizens and US permanent residents regardless of their parent's immigration status, are eligible for state and federal financial aid. When the parent enters his or her information on the student's FAFSA, the parent would just enter all zeroes in the section that asks for the parent's social security number.

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility>

**Q: Can undocumented students attend college?**

**A:** Yes, they can attend college. Most colleges will base an admissions decision on high school academics and ACT or SAT score, along with other information such as essays, awards, extracurricular activities, although each college may use slightly different criteria for admission. Undocumented students will not be eligible for state and federal aid though so other sources to pay for college must be identified.

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility>

**Q: Can an undocumented student be assessed in-state or in-district tuition at a public Illinois university or community college?**

**A:** Illinois Public Act 93-007 allows for a student to receive in-state or in-district tuition at Illinois public universities and community colleges as long as he/she lived with a parent in Illinois, graduated from an Illinois high school, attended school for at least three years prior to graduating from high school, and signs an affidavit stating that he/she will apply for US permanent residency as soon as he/she is eligible.

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=093-007>



**Q: My student has a social security number through DACA. Can he/she receive financial aid after filling out the FAFSA?**

**A:** Students who have received DACA do not qualify for any federal aid (i.e. Pell Grant, Direct Student Loans, Work-Study). In Illinois, DACA students are not eligible for the Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant, which is a state grant. In Illinois, students that have received DACA are encouraged to contact the colleges that they are interested in attending to determine how they should proceed to be considered for any institutional aid (i.e. grants/scholarships from the college), since completing the FAFSA will not make them eligible for any student financial aid.

*<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/non-us-citizens>*

*<http://www.isac.org/resources-for-non-us-citizens/>*

**Q: Are there any scholarships for which undocumented students can apply?**

**A:** Yes, students are encouraged to work with the college for any institutional scholarships along with utilizing free scholarship search engines, such as Greenlight ([www.CollegeGreenLight.com/isac](http://www.CollegeGreenLight.com/isac)) or any other free scholarship database.



## Appendix F

### Statewide Provider Database

#### What is the Statewide Provider Database?

The Statewide Provider Database (SPD) is an online database with comprehensive information on service agencies and programs throughout the state of Illinois. The SPD was developed to assist caseworkers in identifying and locating appropriate services for their clients. SPD contains information on services that are open to children and families (DCFS affiliated and not), regardless of whether an agency has a contract with DCFS. SPD is being used by caseworkers and community partners across Illinois.

#### How Can SPD Help You?

SPD saves you time by searching all the available resources for the closest provider that offers the service you are looking for. Each program in the SPD is assigned a geocode according to the program's address, which allows users of SPD to search for services by distance from a client's location. Currently, SPD includes over 1400 agencies, 2700 programs, and over 15,000 services.

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#### There is a wide range of programs in the SPD:

- Mental Health: Counseling programs that offer a standard set of outpatient behavioral health services along with other types of services.
- Substance Abuse: Programs focused primarily on treatment of substance abuse.
- Parenting: Programs designed to meet the needs of families working on reunification or intact families who are improving parenting skills through training or coaching.
- Domestic Violence: Programs offering a range of services to help families cope with domestic violence.
- Early Childhood: Programs focused on interventions for young children, including but not limited to health screenings and developmental assessments.

- General Medical: Medical Providers.
- Nonclinical: A variety of after-school or recreational programs, including tutoring, mentoring, or vocational services.

#### Accessing the SPD

The SPD is located at the following address:

<https://illinoisoutcomes.dcf.illinois.gov>

Non-DCFS employees can contact Dana Weiner ([dana.weiner@illinois.gov](mailto:dana.weiner@illinois.gov)) to get access to the SPD or the Statewide Provider Database team members can be reached by calling 312-814-1228.

Please call if you:

- Are interested in receiving training
- Find information that is inaccurate or have information on a resource that is not listed in the SPD
- Would like to collaborate with the SPD team

## Appendix G

### Words and Phrases to Know

**504 Plan (Section 504)** is a section of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified persons based upon their disability. The regulations implementing this law require entities receiving federal funds to provide reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities whether in regular or special education or in Early Intervention (EI) services so that they can benefit from their educational or developmental experiences. This law requires schools to prepare a plan (commonly called a 504 plan), preferably written, for each child with a disability to outline how it will provide the child with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. An IEP or IFSP developed for the child may be used as the 504 plan.

**Caseworker** performs casework services for children and families in care. Their role is to ensure that the client's environmental and psycho-social needs are being met and to implement a permanent living plan for each child. The caseworker is also commonly referred to as a "permanency worker".

**Education Advisors** provide educational advocacy, technical assistance, and training on behalf of children birth to 21 years of age. They are located in DCFS regional offices throughout the State and help DCFS and the private agency caregivers and caseworkers obtain appropriate educational services for the children in their home or agency.

**Education Plan** is a plan developed and implemented to provide a framework for needed educational or developmental services, supports and interests for each child in the care and custody of the Department in order to promote educational/developmental progress. Caseworkers are required to document an education or developmental services plan for each child in the Family Service Plan, using all information gathered, including information from the CFS 407-4, Education Profile (Assessment) and the CFS 407-HS and Annual High School Academic Plan.

**Educational Surrogate Parent** is a person appointed either by the court in accordance with 705 ILCS 405/2-10.2, or by the Illinois State Board of Education to serve as the representative for the youth in special education services in accordance with 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226. The Educational Surrogate Parent has the authority to sign the request for case study evaluation, consent for the case study evaluation, initial educational placement, and educational reevaluations for Department youth. The Educational Surrogate Parent is also



the person authorized to access the Illinois State Board of Education due process system for children for whom the Department is legally responsible.

**Fictive Kin** means an individual, unrelated by birth or marriage, who is shown to have close personal or emotional ties with the child or the child's family prior to the child's placement with the individual. Placement Workers and Permanency Workers are to ask parents and children to identify non-custodial parents, maternal and paternal grandparents and other relatives of children entering substitute care, and to ask parents and children about their fictive kin throughout the life of the case, to continue to ask about relatives, develop a network of individuals for the child who may help support the child and family, and build lifelong connections for the child.

**Foster care or substitute care:** is a temporary safe haven for children who are at serious risk of harm. When possible, the Department of Children and Family Services and other agencies work with families to reunite them. When that simply is not possible, DCFS works to find children a permanent, loving home through adoption or guardianship.

**Foster parent:** Although this term has a wide variety of possible definitions, it is generally used to refer to adults who are licensed by the state or county to provide a temporary home for children whose birth parents are unable to care for them. A foster parent is not a legal custodian.

**Legal Guardian:** A person appointed by a court of law who has the duty and authority to act in the best interests of the minor, subject to residual parental rights and responsibilities, to make important decisions in matters having a permanent effect of the life and development of the minor and to be concerned with his or her general welfare. The DCFS Guardianship Administrator is the legal guardian of youth in DCFS care.

**Procedure 314:** is the official IL DCFS Policy Guide on Educational Services

**Procedure 359:** is the official IL DCFS Policy Guide on Child Care Payments

**Protective Custody:** Emergency removal of child at risk of abuse and neglect from the home by DCFS to protect the child's safety

**Temporary Custody:** The court decides, in a temporary custody hearing, if there is probable cause, urgent and immediate necessity, and if the 'best interest of the minor' requires the court to place the child in the custody of DCFS.

**Youth in care:** means a child for whom DCFS is legally responsible through temporary protective custody, custody or guardianship via court order, or children whose parent(s) has signed an adoptive surrender or voluntary placement agreement with the Department. The term "youth" or "youth or child in foster care" is the preferred title for a child within the system.

## Disclaimer

This guidebook is provided as a public service by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and is intended for the informational use and convenience of interested persons and should not be considered a substitute for the advice of legal counsel. Although the information found in this guide is believed to be reliable at the time of publication--no warranty, expressed or implied, is made regarding the accuracy, completeness, or legality of any information, either isolated or aggregate. This information is provided "as is". Changes may be made periodically to the information contained herein; these changes may or may not be incorporated into this guide.

These questions are generalized for ease even though situations involving youth in care should often be individualized. If a specific question is not answered here, please contact one of the resources included for further guidance.

Additional copies can be obtained by contacting the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Communications at 312-814-6800. The guide can also be accessed online on the DCFS website at [www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov).

Further, if you find any errors or omissions, we encourage you to report them to the DCFS Office of Education and Transition at [tiffany.gholson@illinois.gov](mailto:tiffany.gholson@illinois.gov)





**[www.DCFS.Illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.Illinois.gov)**

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