Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care: Effective Collaboration

September 7, 2016
TODAY’S PRESENTERS

 Stevi Steines  
  Chief Deputy, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S.  
  Department of Health and Human Services  

 Mary Myslewicz  
  Casey Fellow, Office of Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Department of  
  Education  

 Lessons from the Field  
  – Kathleen McNaught, Project Director, Legal Center for Foster Care  
    and Education, ABA Center on Children and the Law  
  – Judge Robert Hofmann, 452nd District Court Judge, Vice Chair of  
    the Children’s Commission, and Chair of Foster Care & Education  
    Committee  
  – Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney, Supreme Court of Texas Permanent  
    Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children’s  
    Commission)  
  – Kelly Kravitz, State Coordinator, Foster Care Education & Policy  
    and McKinney-Vento Homeless Programs, Texas Education Agency  
  – Jenny Hinson, Division Administrator for Permanency, Texas  
    Department of Family and Protective Services
TODAY’S AGENDA

- Provide an overview of the federal framework for ensuring educational stability for children in foster care and the joint guidance related to collaboration

- Highlight essential components for consideration when establishing a collaboration between child welfare agencies and education agencies

- Provide lessons learned from implementation of cross-agency collaboration initiative in Texas

- Q&A

QUESTIONS?
Please submit your questions for our presenters in the “Q&A” box on the right of your screen.
EDUCATIONAL STABILITY: A TIMELINE

October 2008:
The Fostering Connections to Success & Increasing Adoptions Act

June 2016:
ED/HHS Foster Care Guidance Released

December 2016:
ESSA Foster Care Provisions Take Effect

December 2015:
The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Aug./Sept. 2016:
ED/HHS Foster Care TA Webinar Series
KEY ESSA PROVISIONS

 Children in foster care remain in the school of origin, unless it is determined that it is not in his or her best interest.

 If it is not in the child’s best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child must be immediately enrolled in the new school even if they don’t have the required documentation.

 Each state education agency (SEA) must designate a point of contact (POC) for child welfare agencies (CWAs). Local education agencies (LEAs) must also designate a POC for CWAs if the corresponding CWA notifies the LEA, in writing, that it has designate a POC.

 LEAs must collaborate with CWAs to develop and implement clear written procedures for how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of a child’s time in foster care.
MCKINNEY-VENTO UPDATE

- The phrase “awaiting foster care placement” will be removed from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act’s definition of homeless children and youth.
  - For non-covered states, this change is effective 12/10/16
  - For covered states—that is, States that define “awaiting foster care placement” in statute—this change is effective 12/10/17

- After the effective date, youth “awaiting foster care placement” must be served under ESSA

- Some children in foster care may still be eligible for McKinney-Vento services (e.g., youth who are living in transitional shelters or motels)

Access ED’s Guidance on the ESSA Amendments to McKinney-Vento:
# JOINT GUIDANCE

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Access the joint guidance:

# JOINT ED-HHS WEBINAR SERIES

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Effective Collaboration
EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

ESSA REQUIREMENTS

Under ESSA, each state plan shall describe--

- The steps an SEA will take to ensure collaboration with the state child welfare agency to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care

Each LEA shall provide assurances that the LEA will:

- Collaborate with the State or local child welfare agency to--
  - Designate a point of contact
  - Develop and implement clear written transportation procedures
EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

GUIDANCE PROVISIONS

- Consideration should be given to establishing a structure at the local level
- Provide opportunities to cross-train both child welfare agency and education staff
- Engage variety of stakeholders
- Collaboration should be on-going and continuously works to improve outcomes for children in foster care
Lessons from the Field
LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: ABA

GUEST PRESENTER

Kathleen McNaught
Project Director, Legal Center for Foster Care and Education
American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law
kathleen.mcnaught@americanbar.org
PRELIMINARY STEP: DECIDING WHO NEEDS TO BE AT THE TABLE

- Judiciary
- Attorneys & advocates
- Child welfare agency staff
- Educators
- Parents
- Children & youth
- Foster parents
STEP 1: COMMON KNOWLEDGE BASE

- Understand your own polices and practice (including gaps)
- Think about your own goals and priorities
- Learn about other systems
STEP 2: ESTABLISH JOINT GOALS & PROCESS

- Establish process and team
- Collaboratively identify obstacles, challenges, and opportunities
- Take action—develop plans and set priorities
- Track and measure progress; revise as needed

Some Key Tips for Success:
- Start simple
- Start small
- Do not avoid biggest obstacles
STEP 3: MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

- Staff resources (points of contact)
- Celebrate early victories
- Keep agency leadership (and courts) engaged
- Data drives change and supports progress
- Memorialize changes and collaboration
- Ongoing training and communication
LEGAL CENTER FOR FOSTER CARE AND EDUCATION

www.fostercareandeducation.org/AreasofFocus/EducationStability.aspx

- Q&A on ESSA
- PowerPoint presentation
- Summary of joint guidance
- Roles and Responsibilities checklist

- Coming Soon:
  - Sample LEA transportation procedures
  - Sample state-level guidance
CONCLUSION

what people think it looks like

what it really looks like
LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: TEXAS

GUEST PRESENTERS

Judge Robert Hofmann
452nd District Court Judge, Vice Chair of the Children’s Commission, and Chair of Foster Care and Education Committee
rob.hofmann@txcourts.gov

Jamie Bernstein
Staff Attorney
Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children’s Commission)
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LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: TEXAS

GUEST PRESENTERS

Kelly Kravtiz
State Coordinator, Foster Care Education & Policy and McKinney-Vento Homeless Programs
Texas Education Agency
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Jenny Hinson
Division Administrator for Permanency
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
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Different Systems, Finding Common Ground

Judge Robert Hofmann
DEVELOPING A COMMON LANGUAGE

Child Welfare Regions

Education Regions
BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

- Data sharing
- Mutual understanding of policies and procedures
- Staff turnover
- Enrollment issues
- Placement disruptions
- Trust
Children’s Commission

- Established by Supreme Court of Texas order in November 2007
- Chaired by Justice Eva Guzman
- Administer the federal Court Improvement Program grant
- Serve as a facilitator of collaboration for state leaders in the executive, judicial, and legislative branches

Education Committee

- Idea developed by Texas team during National Leadership Summit on Child Protection, October 2009
- Focus: Education outcomes for children and youth in foster care
- Commitment of statewide resources to examine educational outcomes and make recommendations for improvement
# CHILDREN’S COMMISSION EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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THE STATE AS PARENT = THESE CHILDREN ARE 
"OUR" RESPONSIBILITY

Diagram:
- CPS
- Schools
- Courts

Arrows indicate the flow between these entities.
THE TEXAS BLUEPRINT:
Transforming Education Outcomes For Children & Youth In Foster Care

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS
CHILDREN’S COMMISSION
MARCH 31, 2012
Developing Priorities

Jamie Bernstein
TEXAS BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

- Established in December 2012 by Children’s Commission
- Monitored progress of collaborative workgroups addressing a variety of education related topics:
  - Data Collection and Information Sharing
  - School Stability
  - Training and Resources

STATE LAW IMPROVEMENTS

- Consideration of educational needs and goals during Permanency Hearings
- Attorneys and guardians ad litem must be knowledgeable about children’s educational needs and goals
- Education decision-maker provisions
- Foster care indicator added to Texas’ state education data collection
- K-12 and postsecondary liaisons for students in foster care
- Excused school absences due to court-ordered appointments and activities related to CPS service plan
TRAINING

- Texas’ first Foster Care and Education Summit, February 2013
  - Kicked off with a joint invitation from Supreme Court Justice Eva Guzman and the Commissioners of the state child welfare and education agencies
  - Attended by approximately 200 judges, school district and education service center representatives, CPS, CASA, and advocates

- Cross-disciplinary training throughout the state
- Education consortia
- National Dropout Prevention Conference – professional development track for Texas foster care liaisons
MOBILIZING DATA-DRIVEN CHANGE

- Statewide data exchange since 2008-09, updated MOU between TEA and DFPS in 2014
- Aggregate foster care education data is shared in presentations with education, court, and child welfare audiences
- Participation in national information sharing programs
- Developed shared definitions across systems
- Mapped data collection timelines
- Identified priority data indicators
COURT INVOLVEMENT

- Play a key leadership role
- Provide judicial education and correspondence about educational needs of students in foster care
- Judges are statutorily required to ask about education at hearings
- Created an Education Checklist
MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

Education Committee Created 2010
Texas Blueprint Report Released 2012
Implementation Task Force 2012-2014
FC & Education Committee Created 2015
Building Infrastructure

Kelly Kravitz
TEXAS TRIO PROJECT: STRENGTHENING COURT, CHILD WELFARE, AND EDUCATION CONNECTIONS FOR YOUTH

DFPS (State and Region 6)

Houston ISD

Children’s Commission

UT- Child and Family Research Institute

Texas Education Agency

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families awarded Child Welfare Education Demonstration Grant to Texas
Comprehensive resource and training guide, released in October 2013; written by TEA, DFPS, and Children’s Commission

Foundational guide for education community, foster care liaisons, and all who support the education of students in foster care

Includes policy, practice, laws, and resources for school district training and development on foster care and education

http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/
STATE EDUCATION AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

- Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator added to SEA in 2012
  - Implementation of numerous state education laws
  - Development of tools and resources
  - Mobilize coordination and collaboration across numerous divisions and programs
  - Building capacity and creating linkages across a variety of state and federal education programs
  - Participation in Texas Blueprint Implementation Taskforce workgroups and activities
SEA LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES

- Every district and charter school designates a Foster Care Liaison
- Engage in meetings across departments to increase awareness in SEA about the education of students in foster care (Curriculum, School Improvement, Title I, College and Career Readiness, Fiscal)
- Leverage existing processes, systems and regional education communication networks to increase capacity within state’s education system
- Regional Education Service Centers – Foster Care Champions
- Host Foster Care & Student Success webpage on SEA site
- Develop data indicator and process for identifying and reporting students in foster care in Texas schools
- Disseminate information and materials
- Include foster care and education in major statewide education conferences and educator meetings
ESSA IMPLEMENTATION | SEA COORDINATOR
ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Convene stakeholders
- Coordinate at SEA with Title I, Legal, Data, Transportation, etc.
- Document collaborative activities and provide information for State Plan
- Champion across program areas
- Problem solve and educate
- Train and equip
Strengthening Collaboration

Jenny Hinson
CHILD WELFARE ENGAGEMENT

- Updated numerous policies and contracts
- Designated Education Specialists in each region
- Developed form to identify education decision-maker
- Created internal website and portal of education information for DFPS staff
- Developed publications for caregivers
- Formalized collaboration through regional education consortiums
DFPS/CPS EDUCATION SPECIALISTS

- Work with stakeholders to improve educational outcomes for children and youth in conservatorship
- Ensure every child/student has the necessary resources to meet and exceed each child’s educational goals and needs through representation and advocacy
- Primary resource and subject matter expert for caseworkers, schools, community stakeholders on foster care and education
- Participate in state and regional committees, workgroups, and local courts
TEXAS CASA EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

- Collaborative document developed by Texas CASA, DFPS, TEA, Children’s Commission, and other stakeholders
- Contains tools and resources to help advocates navigate the educational challenges facing students in foster care
- Breaks down the different education decision-making roles and the involvement of the Court Appointed Special Advocate

http://texascasa.org/learning-center/resources/educational-advocacy-toolkit/
BUILDING COLLABORATION | LESSONS LEARNED

- Establish contacts and build relationships across systems
- Establish shared vision and goals
- Create opportunities to learn about one another’s systems, agency jargon, decision-making processes, services provided, legal mandates, constraints, etc.
- Include other stakeholders and relevant partners
- Use data to track progress
- Celebrate successes and victories

- Each system provides unique insights and perspectives that are necessary for effective collaboration and improved student outcomes
- Remain open and positive
- Listen and seek understanding of what is new or unknown
- Develop strategies for collaborative work
- Identify high-level champions
- Involve youth and alumni
Questions for Panelists?

Please submit questions in the “Q&A” box on the right of your screen.
QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION?

CONTACT US!

SEAs & LEAs

- Send questions to ED’s ESSA mailbox: essa.questions@ed.gov
- Contact your Office of State Support Program Officer: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oss/contacts.html

CWAs

- The Children’s Bureau (CB) provides technical assistance through the Capacity Building Center for States
  - For additional information, reach out to your Center for States Liaison - https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/map

For additional information, please visit our websites:

- HHS’ Educational Stability for Children and Youth in Foster Care page - https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/service-array/education-services/meeting-needs/educational-stability/
Thank you!