

Best Practices: Best Interest Determination Meeting Process

1) Notification

DCYF notifies the LEA of origin of a new placement in foster care or when a change in foster care placement occurs through the School Notification Form. A change in foster care placement triggers the Best Interest Determination process.

- The School Notification Form can be accessed at <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/node/1812>

2) Schedule Best Interest Determination Meeting

Upon receipt of the School Notification Form, the Foster Care Liaison of both the School of Origin and the receiving district will schedule the Best Interest Meeting in collaboration with the DCYF Regional Education Lead.

- [Sample Scheduling Email](#)

3) Attendees and Formats

Anyone who can add meaningful input regarding the student and which school placement is in their best interest should attend. To reduce the size and attendance of Best Interest Determinations, if there are multiple people from an agency that have input, please designate one (1) person to attend the meeting on behalf of the agency. Format for the meeting should be decided based on participants ability to attend.

- [Sample Meeting Agenda](#)

If a necessary attendee cannot attend the meeting, they can submit their considerations and comments to the school district Foster Care Liaison or DCYF Regional Education Lead on the Attendee Input Form.

- [Attendee Input Form](#)

4) Meeting Procedure

Input from participants is vital in making informed decisions regarding school placement. There are many factors to consider for student stability and success. The meeting is a collaborative process and is focused on the Best Interest of the student. No one entity makes the decision.

- [Considerations and Questions for Best Interest Determination Meeting](#)



5) Best Interest Determination: Stay at School of Origin

Determination to remain in the school of origin next steps: 1) arrange transportation and 2) ensure that the school Building Point of Contact is aware of student status.

- [School Placement Decision](#)
- [Transportation Shared Cost Procedure](#)

6) Best Interest Determination: Move to New School

Determination to move to school near placement next steps: 1) expedite transfer of records; 2) arrange transportation; and 3) communicate with LEA peers at new school for a warm hand-off.

- [School Placement Decision](#)
- [Enrollment Guidance](#)

Purpose of Best Interest Determination Meetings

Best Interest Determinations are a collaborative process with a focus on the best interest of the student. It is not a determination made by one entity. Best Interest Determinations happen only when there is a change in placement for the student in foster care.

Best Interest Determinations are not intended for a review or meeting regarding educational or behavioral concerns. They are also not IEP meetings. Best Interest Determinations cannot be “revisited”.

If you have any questions about when and how to conduct a Best Interest Determination, please reach out to the Foster Care Education team at OSPI by emailing fostercare@k12.wa.us

Documenting Best Interest Determination Meetings

To keep track of your school district Best Interest Determination Meetings, you can download and customize the [Example: Best Interest Determination Tracking Database](#). This will allow your school district to have documentation of these required meetings.