

Which Students Qualify for Foster Care Support Services?

Students are eligible for support services when they are the “subject of a dependency proceeding” and live in the following placements:

- Foster Home
- Residential Facility
- Relative
- Group Home
- Emergency Shelter
- Pre-adoptive Home
- Trial-return-home

This includes students in Tribal Child Welfare and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors.

Who Are the Adults Involved in a Foster Care Student's Life?

- Social Worker(s)
- Relative Caregiver
- Court-Appointed Lawyer
- Court Appointed Advocates
- Birth Parent(s)
- Foster Parent(s)
- Group Home Case Manager
- Education Advocate(s)



How Can Schools Help?

- Work with Washington's Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to keep students in their school of origin when entering placement.
- Be sensitive to the student's need for confidentiality both from peers and school staff.
- Ensure caregivers and social workers receive report cards, conference information, attendance records, and invitations to important school events.
- Encourage the student to participate in extracurricular and school-engaging activities.
- Assist with credit transfer and retrieval for middle and high school students who are changing schools.
- Work collaboratively with DCYF through records sharing; reporting information regarding transportation, discipline, and school experiences; and answering questions.
- Asking to be notified of court dates and medical appointments that may take the student out of school or cause any emotional upheaval.

For More Information

- Visit the OSPI Foster Care webpage
- Send an email to fostercare@k12.wa.us
- Call 360-725-6505

Scan for more information!



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



Foster Care Education in Washington

OSPI Foster Care Program

The Foster Care Program at OSPI supports students in foster care by encouraging innovative practices that reduce educational disruptions, strengthen school stability, and improve academic performance. Schools, child welfare agencies, communities, and families must work together to provide the equitable opportunities, specialized services, and useful supports that are essential for students in foster care to be successful in school and in life. OSPI partners with other organizations that serve distinct foster care populations. You can view those organizations on the OSPI Foster Care Resources and Training webpage.

Laws Protecting the Rights of Students in Foster Care

There are 4 main components of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that relate to students in foster care. Washington state has also codified these components into law:

1. Every school district is required to designate a Foster Care Liaison.
2. Students remain in school of origin (the school they were attending when they entered care) unless there is a determination that it is not in their best interest.
3. Students in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment and attendance, even without documents normally required by school districts.
4. Schools/OSPI must collaborate with child welfare agencies.

The OSPI website provides a full list of state and federal laws regarding students in foster care.

School Stability

According to Washington state law (RCW 74.13.550), "It is the policy of the state of Washington that, whenever practical and in the best interest of the child, children who are the subject of a dependency proceeding shall remain enrolled in their schools of origin."

Students in foster care experience inequity in educational outcomes as compared to their non-foster care peers. There are many factors that influence these outcomes, including frequent school moves.

Keeping students in their school of origin should be prioritized, as educational continuity helps improve educational outcomes for students in foster care.

