

# *Best Practices: Considerations for Best Interest Determination Meeting*

## **Making Informed Decisions**

In order to make informed decisions about selecting the school that is in the best interest of the student in foster care, it is important to have as much information as possible. Best Interest Determination Meeting participants play a valuable role in helping choose the school that is in a student's best interest. Participants may be able to:

- Provide input on the academic, social, and emotional impact that transferring to a new school may have on the child.
- If the child has special education needs, provide input on the impact that changing schools may have on the child's progress and services. If a school change is deemed in the best interest, the special education services, evaluations and/or services must not be interrupted.
- Help determine which programs at the two schools are comparable and appropriate for the child.
- Work with caseworkers to develop immediate and long-term plans for the student, ensuring that the student's education is not interrupted and considering the anticipated duration of the child's out-of-home placement and permanency plan.
- Expedite the transfer of school records when it is determined that it is in the best interests of a child to transfer to a new school.
- The Best Interest Determination meeting is a collaborative process that is focused on the Best Interest of the student. Determinations are made together as a team, not by one entity.



## Key Questions to Consider

1. How long is the child's current placement expected to last?
2. What is the child's child welfare permanency plan?
3. How many schools has the child attended over the past few years and how have they impacted the student?
4. How many schools has the child attended this year?
5. What is the age and grade level of the student?
6. How have the school transfers affected the child emotionally, academically, socially, and physically?
7. How strong is the child academically?
8. To what extent are the programs and activities at the potential new school comparable to or better than those at the current school?
9. Does one school have the programs and activities that address the unique needs or interests of the student that the other school does not have?
10. How deep are the child's ties to his or her current school (school of origin)?
11. Would the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture such as after testing, after an event that is significant to the child or at the end of the school year?
12. How would changing schools affect the student's ability to earn full academic credit, participate in sports or other extra-curricular activities, proceed to the next grade, or graduate on time?
13. How the length of the commute to the school of origin or school under consideration would impact the student, in terms of distance, mode of transportation, travel time, and student's developmental stage.
14. How anxious is the child about having been removed from the home and/or any upcoming moves?
15. What school do the student's siblings attend?
16. Influence of the school climate on the student, including any safety issues.

17. Which school can better serve the special education (504's, IEP's) needs of the student and related services?
18. If the student has special needs, what impact will be transferring to a new school have on the student's progress and services?
19. What are the immediate and long-term educational plans of, and for, the student?
20. The availability and quality of services in the school to meet the student's educational and socioemotional needs.
21. If the student is an English Language Learner and is receiving language services, what are the availability of those required services in a school other than the school of origin or are those needs being met in the school of origin?
22. Which school does the student prefer?
23. Preferences of the student's parent(s).

## Transportation

While the convenience and cost of transportation to the school district cannot be a consideration, distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs may be considered during the best interest determination meeting.

## School Notification Form

Factors for consideration are also listed on page 2 of the [School Notification Form](#).