

Enhancing Educational Outcomes Through School Stability for Foster Youth from the Time of Placement

SUMMARY

Children and youth removed from their home as a result of abuse or neglect and placed in foster care are eligible to remain in their school to promote school stability and improve educational outcomes. These “school of origin rights” include funding reimbursement to the caregiver for transporting a child to school as part of the foster care maintenance payment.

However, transportation funding does not begin until the caregiver is approved through the resource family approval process, which means children and youth placed with emergency caregivers (usually relatives) prior to resource family approval must wait many months before they begin to receive funding to transport the child to their school of origin.

ISSUE

Caregivers are entitled to reimbursement for providing transportation to a child’s school of origin once they are approved as resource families. However, because funding does not begin at the time of placement, emergency caregivers are not immediately eligible for reimbursement. Resource Family Approval takes an average of 125 days to complete –nearly a three-quarters of a school year. Without financial support to cover the cost of transportation, it is often untenable for families to transport a child to their school of origin.

Without immediate access to transportation reimbursement, children often end up changing schools when they change placements; preventing them from exercising their right to remain in their school of origin, disrupting community

connections and further compounding their trauma.

Students in the California foster care system have the poorest outcomes of any subgroup (51% of foster youth graduate high school compared to the 84% state average), due in part to the fact that youth in care change schools an average of eight times while in care, losing four to six months of educational progress with each move. Studies also consistently show that school stability is critical for academic achievement and social/emotional wellbeing.

PROPOSED BILL

This proposed bill will enhance educational outcomes and promote school and placement stability by ensuring that foster children who qualify for education transportation reimbursement receive that support at the time of placement even if the caregiver has not completed resource family approval.

This proposal will also provide families with notice of their right to receive reimbursement for the cost of transporting a youth to their school of origin.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Angie Schwartz, Policy Director,
Alliance for Children’s Rights
916-930-0275 x 208
a.schwartz@kids-alliance.org