2023-24 Foster Care Education Mid-Year Check-in Content Summary

Original Meeting Date: 1/23/24

The following is a synthesized summary of the discussion points from the 2023-24 Foster Care Education Mid-Year Check-in. The document has been organized in correspondence with the slide titles, which will be visible on the recorded [presentation](). Exact transcripts are available upon request.

Question 1 (25:36) What do you want to know from your LEA or CCYA counterparts?

Participants provided insights into what Points of Contact (POCs) from both child welfare agencies (CCYAs) and schools would like to know from each other. The key points include:

Inclusion in Court Sessions

Doris Hagemann emphasizes the importance of including schools in court sessions where educational decisions may occur, suggesting a desire for collaboration between child welfare agencies and schools in legal proceedings.

Miranda Jenkins emphasizes the need for schools to be included or at least notified of court hearings to ensure that decisions are not made without involving both districts. This suggests a desire for collaborative decision-making and information sharing.

Communication Regarding Caseworker Changes

Participants, including Yarilis Ruiz and Christine Sellers, highlight the need for timely communication when there is a change in caseworkers for students. This indicates a desire for transparency and collaboration in sharing important information.

Timely Information on Student Placement Changes

Mandi Kercher emphasizes the importance of knowing timelines related to student placement changes. This indicates a desire for clear communication and planning between child welfare agencies and schools.

Notification of Educational Rights and Emergency Contacts

Paula Fleming and others express the need for schools to know who has educational rights, emergency contacts, and information related to safety and past behavioral issues before the Best Interest Determination (BID). This highlights a desire for clear communication on legal and safety-related matters.

BID Process and Requirements

Several participants, including Catherine Girton and Kate Diorio, seek clarity on the necessity of BID meetings for all students in foster care and the requirements associated with the BID process. This indicates a need for guidance on procedural matters.

Proactive Communication Over the Summer

Miranda Jenkins emphasizes the need for proactive communication over the summer regarding changes in placement. This points to a desire for early and effective communication to prevent last-minute challenges during the school year.

Information Sharing and Centralized Record Systems

Participants, including Barbara Boland, highlight the importance of centralized record sharing between schools. This suggests a need for streamlined information systems to facilitate efficient communication.

Training for Caseworkers

Kelli Mullany points out that many caseworkers are not aware of the required BID process and suggests that all caseworkers should be trained. This indicates a desire for improved training and awareness within child welfare agencies.

Sharing of Permanency Plans and Annual Letters

Participants, including Diana Zuhlke and Beth Zimmerman, inquire about the sharing of permanency plans and annual letters with schools. This suggests a desire for access to comprehensive information about students in foster care.

These responses collectively emphasize the importance of clear communication, collaboration, and timely sharing of information between child welfare agencies and schools to support the educational needs of students in foster care. Improved processes and training are also highlighted as essential elements for effective collaboration.

Question 2 (32:40) What guidance do you need from the Pennsylvania Department of Education?

Participants expressed several key areas where they seek clearer guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) or the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS). The main themes include:

Transportation Collaboration

Amie McKeel seeks tips and tricks for engaging districts in assisting with transportation. This indicates a need for guidance on facilitating collaboration between child welfare agencies and school districts to address transportation challenges.

Safety Plans and BID Meetings

Sherry Black highlights issues with safety plans and the need for Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings in non-foster care situations. This suggests a desire for clarity on when and how BID meetings should be conducted.

Notification and Information Sharing

Participants express concerns about delays in notifications and withdrawals of students, emphasizing the importance of timely information sharing. This points to a need for guidance on notification processes and effective communication between child welfare agencies and schools.

Tina Onassis highlights challenges in information sharing between districts and social services agencies when students are withdrawn and dropped in new districts. This reflects a need for guidance on effective communication protocols and record sharing.

Educational and Medical Rights

Susan Shinn-Thomas raises a significant concern about determining educational and medical rights for students in foster care, including signing off on IEPs/504 Plans. This highlights a need for clear guidance on the allocation of rights and responsibilities in these areas.

Summer Coverage for Points of Contact

Diane Meyer suggests designating someone to cover for Points of Contact during the summer to address foster placements, indicating a need for guidance on ensuring continuity and responsiveness during periods of staff absence.

Prioritizing BID Meetings and End-Dated Students

Participants, including Nicolle Schrage and Miranda Jenkins, discuss issues with students being end-dated or withdrawn from schools before BID meetings. This underscores the need for guidance on prioritizing BID meetings and preventing premature student withdrawals.

PIMS Guidance

Nicolle Schrage seeks guidance on PIMS (Pennsylvania Information Management System) regarding students being end-dated/withdrawn from their schools of origin. This indicates a specific need for technical guidance related to data management systems.

These responses collectively point to challenges related to collaboration, communication, and procedural clarity between child welfare agencies and educational institutions. Addressing these concerns with clear guidance could improve the overall support provided to students in foster care.

Question 3 (40:22) – Please provide feedback on the current BID school placement form, available online.

The participants provided various reactions to the usability of the [online school selection tool](#) for Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings. Most attendees reported positive outcomes/usability for the online school selection tool. Some reported mixed outcomes. The most specific challenge highlighted is the reluctance of CCYAs to use the form, or their insistence on using their own.

Share your Best Practices (45:50)

The responses regarding best practices for Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings include the following insights:

Coordination with Foster Parents

Sydney Hoffman highlighted an issue where foster parents request school withdrawal when a foster youth is moved, causing problems in the BID process. She reached out to foster providers to address this issue.

Use of Synthesized Forms

Yarilis Ruiz mentioned using a more synthesized and concise two-page form, indicating a preference for a streamlined document.

Discharge Section Creation

Tanya Shea shared her best practice of creating a discharge section to provide information to districts, suggesting a structured approach to handling student transfers.

Collaboration with Neighboring Districts

Karen Farrer and others emphasized collaborating with neighboring districts, specifically mentioning collaboration on transportation, indicating a cooperative approach to address challenges.

Trauma Background Information

Robert Rosenthal discussed challenges in obtaining background information regarding trauma to support students and highlighted pushback from agencies, revealing a hurdle in accessing crucial information.

Information Sharing Guide

Tanya Shea suggested using an information sharing guide between Child and Youth Services (CYS) and schools to address challenges in obtaining background information.

Request for Additional Information

Kate Diorio shared a best practice of requesting more information to support students, indicating the importance of comprehensive data for making informed decisions.

Positive Collaboration Experience

Heather Newell commended the outstanding collaboration with neighboring districts in Westmoreland County on transportation, providing a positive example of district cooperation.

Challenges in Decision-Making

Amie McKeel highlighted the need for agencies to focus on helping staff and facilitating decision-making for caseworkers, emphasizing the importance of support and healing.

Search for Information Sharing Guide

Wendy Mikolich inquired about the location of the information sharing guide, expressing interest in accessing relevant resources.

These responses collectively provide a range of best practices and challenges related to BID meetings, offering valuable insights for improving processes and collaboration in the context of foster care and education.

Question 5 (52:55) Which of these work items would most improve your practice?

In question 5, participants were asked to express their preferences between these options:

- Option 1: An online community of practice.

- Option 2: Toolkit for new Points of Contact.

- Option 3: Online School Stability 101 course.

Results of responses:

- Preference for Option 1: 6

- Preference for Option 2: 25

- Preference for Option 3: 3

- Preference for Options 1 and 2: 2

- Preference for All Options: 17

Overall, a significant number of participants preferred Option 2, with several expressing a preference for multiple options or all of them.