



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

August 4, 2025

Dear Colleague,

On November 15, 2024, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) jointly issued updated *Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability and Success for Students in Foster Care*. This release marks the first major federal update to non-regulatory guidance in nearly a decade, following the enactment of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015. The updated non-regulatory guidance is attached for your reference and is also available [online](#).

Since the passage of ESSA, the Pennsylvania Departments of Education (PDE) and Human Services (DHS) have worked collaboratively to implement Title I, Part A foster care provisions within local education agencies (LEAs). These protections align closely with those established under the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* (Fostering Connections) for county children and youth agencies (CCYAs). This letter is to inform you of the new non-regulatory guidance as well as to provide you with what to expect in the coming months to assist you in supporting students in foster care.

Building on the initial 2016 non-regulatory guidance, this updated document reflects insights gained over the years regarding the unique needs of students in foster care. It represents the latest best practices for supporting these students while maintaining the existing federal statutory requirements for LEAs and CCYAs. Rather than introducing new mandates, the updated non-regulatory guidance enhances and clarifies strategies to meet program requirements more effectively.

Over the next year, PDE and DHS will collaborate with Center for Schools and Communities, Foster Care Education Regional Offices, and Office of Children Youth and Families (OCYF) Regional Offices to assist LEAs and CCYAs in implementing the updated non-regulatory guidance. This effort will kick off with a joint webinar, offering a comprehensive overview of the revised non-regulatory guidance. Registration details will be provided soon to foster care education points of contact at both LEAs and CCYAs. Throughout the year, we will release additional tools and resources to support your work, alongside updates to existing materials to align with the latest non-regulatory guidance.

PDE and DHS are committed to ensuring that students in foster care have equitable opportunities to achieve their full academic potential. The joint federal update to non-regulatory guidance provides an opportunity to enter the next chapter of ensuring educational stability and success for students in foster care in Pennsylvania.

Thank you for your continued dedication to this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Val Arkoosh".

Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD MPH
Secretary
Department of Human Services

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Rowe".

Dr. Carrie Rowe
Acting Secretary
Department of Education