

Transcript of Foster Care Local Points of Contact Responsibilities, Every Student Succeeds Act

Karen Lehman: Good morning, and welcome to today's online learning session titled Foster Care Local Points of Contact Responsibilities, Every Student Succeeds Act. This session is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in conjunction with the Center for Schools and Communities.

I'm Karen Lehman, Youth Development Project Manager for the Center for Schools and Communities. I will be the moderator for today's online session. Matt Butensky, the State Foster Care Point of Contact will present today's webinar. In this webinar, Matt will provide a brief overview of the federal framework for ensuring educational stability for children in foster care.

He'll review the key Every Student Succeeds Act Title 1 requirements for children in foster care, and how LEAs can meet these requirements. He will then describe the role of the LEA, foster care Point of Contact, and provide sample procedures and resources in order for the LEA Point of Contact to fulfill their role. At this point, I would like to turn the microphone over to Mr. Matt Butensky.

Matt Butensky: Well, good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for this session. Today's session, as Karen prefaced, will provide an initiative framework for Pennsylvania's newly designated local education agency foster care Points of Contact. As part of this framework, we will be including an overview of key Title 1 requirements for children in foster care, which are prescribed under the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA of 2015.

Part of this overview will review how our work is fulfilling and will continue to fulfill the provisions defined under ESSA. We also want to use this time as a training for Pennsylvania's LEA foster care POCs. We'll be describing the potential role and responsibilities of the Points of Contact.

Finally, we will be referencing sample procedures and protocols, including the anticipated role the LEA POC will play in the best interest determination process, school enrollment, and in fulfilling the obligations that transportation is provided, funded, and arranged for foster care youth.

Additionally, before we begin, we do want to thank LEAs across Pennsylvania for their prompt and astute attention to this initiative. We do recognize that you have worked hard to identify your Points of Contact, have collaborated and been actively participating with your county children and youth agency partners. So, thank you, again.

To get things started, we want to provide important context regarding how protections for foster care youth have evolved from the not too distant past to the present. The following is going to be a brief look at the federal framework and

federal milestones, which provide core protections of school stability and school success for youth in foster care.

In 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed and required child welfare agencies to include actions and case plans that would increase educational stability for foster care youth. The law required that child welfare agencies coordinate efforts with education agencies to keep children enrolled in their current school while in foster care whenever possible. Thereby, keeping them connected with family, teachers, and friends while continuing their progression through school.

Then in 2013 with the passing of the Uninterrupted Scholars Act, schools could now disclose education records to child welfare agencies to address student education needs without having to obtain parental consent or a court order. Then we arrive at the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, which was signed into law last December.

ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and ESSA laid out significant changes across the board in education. But today we are reviewing specifically how these policy changes grant special protections for students in foster care. With the implementation of ESSA's Title 1 provisions for foster care youth, which were effective December 10th, 2016, we arrived at truly historic statutory gains for youth in foster care.

ESSA places several requirements on the State Education Agency, or the SEA, of course in Pennsylvania that is the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In addition to local education agencies regarding ensuring the educational stability of foster care youth, we will be discussing those requirements and how we will be meeting those requirements to best serve Pennsylvania's foster care youth.

If you have not accessed it already, I would like to point out that the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services issued a joint guidance on ESSA's foster care provisions. As this was a joint guidance at the federal level, it really speaks to how important collaboration of both the state and local level will be in order to ensure school stability for students in foster care. You may access the joint guidance by clicking the link below.

Again, ESSA was signed into law on December 10th, 2015. It reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. ESSA is all about equity. Equity for students regardless of their background. ESSA's provisions for foster care youth at their core are really about enhancing collaboration and in lining education and child welfare systems to improve services and outcomes for students in foster care.

It's important to note that these provisions found in ESSA mirror or complement the responsibilities found under the Fostering Connections Act of 2008. However, ESSA codifies or formalizes these requirements for the first time. For the first time, ESSA embeds in federal education law provisions that promote school

stability and success for youth in foster care, and requires collaboration between education and child welfare agencies to achieve these goals.

Finally, as was defined by the law's passing in December 2015, the Title 1 provisions for foster care youth must be implemented within one year of the law's passing, which was December 10th, 2016. This work is vitally important. Children and youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in this country and in Pennsylvania.

Of the approximately 415,000 in foster care in 2014, nearly 270 of those were in elementary and secondary schools. There are approximately 14,000 youth in care in Pennsylvania. Children in foster care traditionally experience much higher levels of residential and school instability than their peers.

Studies completed in various states found that the percent of foster youth who change schools when first entering care ranges from 56 to 75%. The percent of 17 to 18-year-olds in care who have experienced five plus school changes is 34%. School instability is educational disruptive to students, and studies find that children in foster care are also much more likely than their peers to struggle academically and fall behind in school.

Students in foster care are also less likely to graduate from high school, with only 65% graduating by age 21 compared to 86% among all youth. School instability is also connected to the post-secondary educational attainment of foster care youth after they exit or age out of care with only 2 to 9% of former foster youth attaining a bachelor's degree.

The Title 1 ESSA provisions aim to limit educational disruption for students in foster care, granting them a stronger educational foundation for school success. Your work in collaboration is key and your role as a foster care Point of Contact is important in reducing these educational barriers for foster youth in Pennsylvania. Given that today's webinar may be many LEA POC's primary introduction to this initiative, we want to review some key information, including a few definitions so that we are applying these provisions for foster care youth as consistently as possible across the Common Wealth.

We have received questions asking, to which children do the new Title 1 requirements apply? The answer to this question is, the requirements apply to all children in foster care enrolled in schools in the State Education Agency. This would include foster care students enrolled in the LEA, such as public school districts and charter schools.

The definition of foster care is consistent with that found under the Fostering Connections Act, that is foster care means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians, and for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility.

This can include foster care youth in a variety of foster care placement settings, including placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes. It should be noted that if an LEA offers a public preschool education, an LEA must meet the Title 1 requirements for children in foster care and preschool as well.

It is our understanding that many of the newly assigned LEA foster care Points of Contact have extensive experience working as or with LEA homeless liaisons. As a reminder, ESSA amended the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, removing children who are awaiting foster care placement from the definition of homeless children and youths, for the purposes of the education for homeless children and youths or the ECYEH program.

Youth awaiting foster care placement may be youth who have been temporarily placed in a setting by the county children and youth agency, while a more permanent placement setting is determined. In other words, beginning December 10th, 2016, LEAs must meet the Title 1 foster care requirements for all foster care youth, including, but not limited to those awaiting foster care placement.

All protections for foster care youth, including those awaiting foster care placement, are found exclusively under Title 1 Part A, which was effective December 10th, 2016. We want to emphasize that although ESSA codifies requirements for education agencies for the first time, we must also emphasize the importance of collaboration and joint decision making between education and child welfare partners.

A dual agency approach and a dual agency vision is paramount to ensuring the educational stability of foster care youth. Let's look at this structural chart highlighting the organizational framework for the initiative here in Pennsylvania. You can see at the top of the chart, we have the state agencies. The state education agency, which is the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the state child welfare agency, or the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

At the state education level, PDE has appointed a state education Point of Contact for foster care youth. PDE has also established eight foster care youth regions throughout Pennsylvania to assist with the initiative's implementation. As you are aware, each LEA in Pennsylvania has identified a foster care Point of Contact.

At the state child welfare level, as county children and youth agencies or CCYAs collaborate with LEAs on the implementation of the ESSA foster care provisions. They can access technical assistance from their respective office of children, youth, and families regional office or their program practice improvement specialist at the child welfare resource center.

Many CCYA offices in PA have identified educational liaisons prior to ESSA or have another staff member that is trained in educational issues. Open dialogue

and routine coordination between all parties will be critical to addressing educational barriers that prevent students in foster care from being identified, enrolling, attending, or succeeding in school.

Next, we want to dive more thoroughly into the role of the LEA Point of Contact and how the LEA POC will be supporting educational stability for foster youth. First, each LEA POC serves as the primary education link between LEAs and the county children and youth agency. This identified link situated in all LEAs is anticipated to play an important role for best interest determinations, coordination of transportation, and enrollment and records transfers.

Unless the school district instructs otherwise, the LEA POC will be the first line of contact at the LEA when the CCYA notifies the LEA of all new or changes in foster care placement. In many cases, the LEA POC has played a critical role already in the beginning stages of this initiative's implementation, and should be included in all future local conversations regarding the continued implementation of this initiative to support educational stability.

The LEA POC should maintain an understanding of the Title 1 foster care provisions and maintain routine coordination with their corresponding CCYA office or CCYA contact to effectively implement these provisions. We understand that these provisions may be new to you.

However, we hope today's webinar provides an informative introduction to the Title 1 requirements and makes clear that there are supports in place to help LEAs meet these responsibilities. Finally, as a reminder, an LEA's foster care Point of Contact is permitted to have other responsibilities, but should be well suited and well supported in their role as POC.

Next, we want to spend some time really defining exactly what the Title 1 requirements are by lifting language found under the law. Then we can navigate how we are going to meet these responsibilities. As education providers, you know the profound impact that a school, its teachers and staff and the relationships students form with their peers can have on a child. Therefore, the heart of the ESSA provision always hearkens back to providing school stability.

These provisions emphasize the importance of limiting educational disruption by keeping children who move in foster care in their schools of origins whenever possible. I do want to review these provisions as they appear in the law. That is, the state education agency, so PDE, must ensure that its local education agencies implement the Title 1 foster care provisions, including ensuring that a child in foster care will enroll or remain in the child's school of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to attend that school.

If a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the child will be immediately enrolled in a new school, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. Also, a new

enrolling school immediately contacts the school of origin to obtain relevant academic and other relevant or pertinent records.

We have been using the term school of origin quite frequently, so I do want to step back just for a minute to review the definition of school of origin. The school of origin is the current school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. As they are entering the foster care system or the school the child is attending at the time of a change in foster care placement.

Remember that it is assumed that the child should always remain in the school of origin, unless the collaborative documented best interest determination, or BID, is made that it is not in the child's best interest. We'll be touching a bit more on the BID process later. But keep in mind that LEA that is the school of origin in conjunction with the placing CCYA are typically going to be the most knowledgeable parties to make BIDs regarding school placement. The LEA school of origin is most familiar with the child's educational history.

As most of us are already aware, there is another central required piece of the Title 1 requirements, which are related specifically to the provision of transportation of foster care youth. Transportation is a central component to school stability in order for students to remain in their school of origin. Let's take a few minutes to review the requirements related to transportation.

Federal education law now requires that at the local level, LEAs collaborate with their state or local child welfare agencies. So here in Pennsylvania, that would be county children and youth agencies or CCYAs, to ensure that transportation is provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care. These procedures must ensure that foster care youth will receive transportation in a cost effective manner and in accordance with Section 475 (4)(A) of the Social Security Act, which means a few things.

First, that an LEA should consider whether transportation can be provided for minimal or no additional costs. One example is that there are preexisting bus routes that can be modified to serve the student. Another example is the foster parents or other family members are willing and able to transport the child to school. The second piece is that if a child is eligible in receiving Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments via the child welfare agency. That agency is permitted to include the reasonable costs of transportation for that child, for that eligible child, given that Title IV-E funds are available.

Second, to ensure that transportation is provided, the ESSA provides the following options if there are additional transportation costs in providing transportation to the school of origin. These are that the LEA will provide such transportation if the LEA is reimbursed by the CCYA, the LEA agrees to pay for the cost, the LEA and the CCYA agree to share the cost, or the LEA of origin, the LEA of residence and the placing CCYA agree to share the cost.

Remember that this is specific to cases where additional costs are incurred. In cases where there are no additional costs, the LEA assumes responsibility. Finally, given the spirit of this initiative, the LEA and the CCYA should make every possible effort to reach agreement regarding how transportation should be funded if there are additional costs. Therefore, LEAs and CCYAs must decide how transportation requirements will be met in the event of a dispute over which agency or agencies will provide transportation and pay any additional costs incurred in providing transportation during the pendency of a dispute.

We have now presented the Title 1 requirements found under ESSA. Now we want to discuss how we will be meeting these responsibilities together, and how we are going to ensure educational stability for PA's foster care youth. PDE has designated a state foster care Point of Contact and has also established eight foster care youth regional coordinator offices.

LEAs must identify and establish a local level foster care Point of Contact, which most of our attendees are foster care POCs in their LEA. LEAs must also formalize a best interest determination process in conjunction with their local CCYA to align requirements of both Fostering Connections and ESSA. This is very important because it enables collaborative input from both the LEA and the CCYA, and additional relevant parties if applicable, regarding school placement decisions or determinations.

It's important to formalize this BID process now if you have not done so already, and a sample BID school placement form is available on pafostercare.org. Continuing on, LEAs must develop, implement, and maintain clear written procedures in collaboration with their local CCYA governing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origins when it is determined to be in their best interest.

I know that LEAs across the state have been making great strides in collaborating with CCYAs to finalize these written transportation procedures. Additionally, LEAs should revise policies that are barriers to enrollment and attendance for foster care youth. If we think back to if a child in foster care is enrolling into a new school, the goal is to eliminate barriers to enrolling that student so that we limit educational disruption as much as possible.

As a reminder, the deadline is today for transportation plan and MOU submission. Please email the PA foster care email account if you have any questions regarding this deadline or to keep us informed on the progress of your transportation plan and MOU.

Now that we have reviewed what the Title 1 requirements are, lifting that language from the law, and also overviewing how we meet those requirements and responsibilities, we want to share the important role that LEA foster care Point of Contact will play in this initiative. Keep in mind that LEAs can fully prescribe the roles and responsibilities of their Point of Contact. However, the

following are the anticipated responsibilities that the school Point of Contact will have.

Given the Title 1 requirements, the POC will be involved in best interest determinations, school enrollment, and the coordination and implementation of established transportation procedures. Again, remembering that the POC is the education link between the LEA and the placing CCYA. The POC is anticipated to be sharing in the development and establishment of formal BID policies and procedures and carrying out and facilitating the established best interest determination process including involvement in resolving disputes.

When the placing CCYA contacts your school, they'll be making contact with the POC and the POC should be prepared to initiate a sequence regarding making a best interest determination for school placement purposes. The BID process is not a one-sided decision. At the very least, it involves the school of origin and the placing CCYA. The POC at the school of origin in many cases will need to coordinate interviews with additional staff of the school of origin to obtain relevant information and gather meaningful input in order to make a BID.

The placing CCYA will also gather meaningful input from relevant parties such as the biological parent or foster parent. The LEA POC should always document and archive in process and completed BIDs. The LEA POC will also play an important role in eliminating enrollment barriers for foster care youth. The LEA POC should assist in facilitating student records transfers between LEAs or the placing CCYA as requested and as appropriate.

This, of course, likely will require coordination with additional staff in the LEA. It is important to establish this coordination and these protocols now. For example, an LEA could consider implementing a protocol that the LEA school of origin sends all essential education records to the receiving school, that is, the new enrolling school within one school day of receiving notice from the placing CCYA that the child will be changing schools.

The LEA POC may also assist with facilitating data sharing between the LEA and the CCYA. When case workers have access to a child's education records, they can make sure the child is receiving appropriate services and interventions. Similarly, when an LEA is aware of which children are in foster care, school professionals have a better understanding of the child's educational needs.

After your LEA has established your local transportation plan and procedures, the LEA POC will want to keep that handy so that they can assist in fulfilling and coordinating these established transportation procedures. Again, recall that the LEA must collaborate with the CCYA to ensure transportation is provided, arranged, and funded.

It's important to note that these transportation plans are not static documents that are set in stone. The LEA POC can make note of areas that could be improved and together with the CCYA, can revise their established transportation plan.

Please note that any revised plan should be submitted on a rolling basis to the PA foster care email account.

The LEA POC should also be aware of the foster care students enrolled in their LEA and monitor their attendance at school. They should notify the child's case worker or their CCYA contact should they have any concerns. The LEA should consider implementing procedures to allow for this responsibility. Additionally, we understand that this is a new initiative, which places new responsibilities at the local level and it may take some time to learn the ins and outs of these requirements.

Over time, the LEA POC will be your school's go-to for information regarding the educational stability of foster youth. At the local level, you are a vital source of information for your colleagues and will play an important role in educating other staff of the requirements of this initiative, so that you can be well supported in your role.

Remember that in many cases, the role of the LEA POC is to serve as a link, and you will frequently find that the POC will need to work with additional staff within the LEA to fulfill the initiative's Title 1 requirements. Since one of the primary responsibilities of the LEA foster care Point of Contact will be to assist in the facilitation of making best interest determinations or BIDs, with the placing CCYA, we wanted to provide a sample BID process.

Again, this is a sample and your BID process may not be identical to this. First, the placing CCYA will of course be initiating a BID because they'll be making contact with the child's school to inform the LEA POC of a new or change in foster care placement. This contact with the LEA initiates a BID with the child's current school, the child's school of origin.

At this time, the CCYA may make a documented recommended BID. That is, do they recommend that the child remains in the school of origin, or do extenuating circumstances necessitate enrollment into a new school? Next, during this time, the LEA and the CCYA should coordinate to make every effort not to disrupt the child's educational stability during the foster care placement. This means that the LEA POC and the CCYA should be exploring how to maintain the child in a school of origin during this time.

Next, if the school of origin requires further information to consider the recommendation of the placing CCYA, the LEA POC will gather relevant student records and will identify and contact any and all meaningful parties associated with the LEA to participate in the best interest determination process. The LEA POC can refer to the BID school placement form to begin considering all educational factors to support the BID.

After the LEA and the placing CCYA have gathered relevant information and coordinated interviews and input from relevant parties, the LEA POC and the placing CCYA will conduct a formal documented BID. If the outcome of the BID is

that the student remains in the school of origin, the LEA immediately implements all established formal written transportation procedures and protocols.

If the student does not remain in the school of origin, the LEA school of origin should immediately facilitate a records transfer to the new enrolling school to eliminate enrollment barriers for their incoming student. The CCYA should immediately inform the new enrolling school of the final BID. Given the coordination requirements of both Fostering Connections and Title 1, relevant agencies should make every effort to reach a joint agreement regarding the appropriate school placement for a child in foster care.

Finally, recall that the LEA should archive all completed BIDs. As a final note, we understand that the best interest determination and transportation procedures can be complex and can spend multiple CCYAs and LEAs and even multiple state education agencies or state child welfare agencies. Of course there is not always a one size fits all approach, and you will likely have cases that are not included within the catchment area of your local plans.

There are 68 CCYAs and more than 700 LEAs in Pennsylvania. LEAs should consider CCYAs or LEAs that they work with frequently regarding foster care youth and establish local policies with these agencies. The good news is that these are federal requirements, so education and child welfare agencies across the country should be familiar with these codified requirements.

Additionally, each LEA in Pennsylvania has identified a foster care Point of Contact, so there is a reference point located within each LEA across the state. Finally, we have already seen great examples of collaboration between LEAs and CCYAs throughout Pennsylvania, and we anticipate that these relationships will grow as the initiative grows.

Expanding on that idea, we want to give LEA Points of Contact an idea of professional staff or networks that they will likely need to work with regarding BIDs, school enrollment and transportation. Making a BID will likely require the feedback and support of other LEA team members. For example, school administrators or counselors may need to assist the LEA POC to obtain relevant education records.

The LEA POC will also want to gather feedback from individuals who have had a significant relationship with the child. More examples would include feedback from a teacher, a counselor or a coach. Additionally, if the child has an IEP or a Section 504 plan, then the IEP team would also need to participate in this process. If the child is an English learner, this relevant staff member should also participate.

Depending on the age of the student, the student should also be included in the BID process. In other words, how will changing schools impact his or her academic, social, and emotional wellbeing? Regarding enrollment, the LEA POC will facilitate records transfers between LEAs and will possibly need to gain

access via a school administrator, the office of enrollment or records, and school counselors or guidance offices.

LEA POCs may also need to work with each other in order to facilitate records transfers between LEAs. Regarding transportation, again, the LEA POC may need to consult with school administrators, most certainly a transportation coordinator or a transportation director and perhaps the foster care youth's school of residence if your local transportation policy clearly defines this interaction between specific LEAs.

In all of these scenarios, the placing CCYA will also be involved given that collaboration is required. The placing CCYA should notify the POC regarding who may contact to make these decisions, including making contact with the biological parents or foster parents if appropriate.

If we step back and look at this chart, we can see how a primary role of the LEA POC is to link parties together and includes consulting with other parties to make decisions to best serve foster youth. A PDF of the current LEA foster care Point of Contact directory is now available and updated as of January 30th, 2017.

There will be an online directory released this spring, however, in the meantime this PDF directory is available and will be updated occasionally to reflect changes, additions, and revisions. You may access the PDF directory by clicking the link on this slide, or visiting pafostercare.org.

We also want to make you aware that technical assistance and professional development does not end today here on this webinar. PDE, DHS, the Center for Schools and Communities and myself as the state education Point of Contact are here to assist you in the implementation of this initiative.

PDE has established eight foster care youth regional coordinator offices throughout Pennsylvania to assist and plan development initiative implementation, to provide technical assistance, and to consult with when agreements between LEAs and CCYAs cannot be reached. You can access the foster care regional office map by clicking on the hyperlink on this page. We are also going to look together at this map next.

Here is a look at the foster care youth regional coordinator office map. Please note which foster care region your LEA is located within. There is contact information provided on the flip side of this map and please feel free to contact your regional office as needed. Again, this map is available as an attachment on this slide and also on the PA foster care website.

There are several key resources to assist LEAs and Points of Contact with this initiative. As mentioned earlier, in June, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services issued joint guidance on the Title 1 requirements for foster care youth, and PDE and DHS have also issued a joint guidance

document to promote awareness among LEAs and CCYAs of key changes and requirements.

Some additional key resources include documents collaboratively released by PDE and DHS, including sample templates to assist LEAs with their transportation plans and MOU, a sample best interest determination school placement form, and a frequently used terms guide. We are also pleased to announce that Pennsylvania's educational stability for foster care youth initiative has its own website.

The website pafostercare.org should be bookmarked as your go-to place for latest information, resources, and tools. This website will be expanded in the near future. However, please visit it now for a complete listing of resources discussed today and check back for new tools and resources to assist you. We also encourage you to visit the PA Department of Education's Every Student Succeeds Act webpage.

Some final resources we want to share is a five part webinar series completed jointly by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The webinar series includes an overview of the joint guidance and more information including lessons from the field and other topics such as Points of Contact, best interest determination and immediate enrollment, transportation, and effective collaboration.

The links to these resources are provided on this slide. If you have any questions from today's webinar, please submit them to the PA foster care email account on the screen. You may also email me at anytime or your designated regional coordinator office at anytime.

Thank you to everyone for your work on this initiative. Thank you for your commitment to improve educational stability for PA's foster care youth. Also, thank you for joining us today, and I look forward to continuing to work with you moving forward on this initiative. At this point, I'd like to turn it back to Karen. Karen?

Karen Lehman: Thank you, Matt. It's a lot of information, and we appreciate you all hanging in there. We did receive quite a few questions. My response to most people was that if we have time, which we do have a few minutes, I'll read some of these questions to Matt if it seems like the answer might be beneficial for the whole group. Matt will use ...

I'm sorry, Matt will use the email address that you used to register for this webinar to respond to you individually with your questions, so we keep a log of the questions as they come in, and so he can get back to you. If your question is not answered in this little session here at the end, please know that Matt will get back to you and answer your question individually.

While Matt gets a drink of water, I'll answer one of these, because I happen to know the answer. The question was about appointing a Point of Contact for a school district. The question was, "Can it be the same person as the homeless liaison?" The understanding was that it was not permitted by federal regulations for it to be the same person.

Actually, the law says that the SEA, which is the Pennsylvania Department of Education, cannot use the same person for both roles at the state level. Storm Camara is our Homeless Coordinator and Matt Butensky, who just did our presentation, is the Point of Contact for Foster Care. The state has two different individuals that are doing two very separate roles. At the local level, there is nothing that prohibits it from being the same person. So there's just some clarification on that question, and thank you Kerry for that question.

I'll read another one here for Matt. There were some questions about BIDs and I know some of you asked early on, so your question might have been answered as he completed his presentation. Matt, does the school of origin need to invite the foster care LEA school to the BID meeting? We're assuming that the child is not at the school of origin and that they've been at a new school, a new school of residence, and there's a BID meeting. Do both of those schools need to be part of the BID meeting?

Matt Butensky:

As we talked about a little bit on this, the LEA that is most familiar with the child's educational history is of course the school of origin in conjunction with the placing children and youth agency. Your local policy, so at this point you're able to formalize local policies regarding what your best interest determination process looks like.

If you have created a local policy with specific school districts to include the school district of residence in your BID process, that is your local policy. However, understand that your local policy may not be consistent with policies found throughout the state. Traditionally, as I said, the school of origin is the most equipped LEA to make those decisions.

Now, given that, the sample school placement form for BID that was released by PDE and DHS does consider what type of educational offerings the possible school of residence would offer to. Those are pieces that the school of origin and the placing CCYA should also be considering during that process.

Of course it would be a courtesy of the school of origin to perhaps inform the LEA Point of Contact at the school of residence of a potential new student coming in. Also, the CCYA will play a role in this if it is determined that it is not in the best interest of the child to remain in the school of origin.

Again, this is ultimately a local policy. You have created a policy that would involve the school of residence and the school of origin that is your local policy. But again, understand that with over 700 LEAs and 65 county children and youth agencies, your local policy might not be reflective of others in the state.

- Karen Lehman: I'm scrolling through some of the questions here. Some are similar and so I'm trying to ask a coherent question that sort of is comprehensive of several of these. There was a question, Matt, about whether county children and youth agencies have received a similar training to this one or are they part of the audience that's on this presentation?
- Matt Butensky: It is my understanding that we do have several contacts from children and youth agencies on our webinar today. There will be future webinars, so this is an open presentation that LEA contacts or CCYA contacts can certainly attend.
- Karen Lehman: There's a question that I am pretty sure we're going to need to do some research on that some of you may not have thought of this. If a student exits foster care, or ages out of foster care, are they permitted to finish the school year in the school that they're attending if it's not the school of origin?
- That is a complicated question about aging out and still being a student. So there might be an IEP if the student might be over the age of the foster care system, but still not received their diploma or finished school. Matt, do you have any information on that or we'll follow through with Andrea?
- Matt Butensky: The Title 1 provisions are in effect for students during the duration of their time in foster care. However, it is encouraged that LEAs consider establishing a local policy that they can perhaps make a local policy for all cases or make a determination on a case by case basis to have the student remain in the school until the end of the school year if they do exit foster care or until a natural break in the school year.
- Ultimately, that is a local decision that will have to be made, keeping in mind that the purpose of this initiative is to have the student remain in the school of origin. Although the Title 1 provisions are in effect only during the duration of their time in foster care, we would ask that you consider the background of the initiative and to limit educational disruption and consider establishing a local procedure that would allow the foster care student who has exited the system to remain in that school until at least the end of the current school year.
- Karen Lehman: Thanks Matt. Doris just added a comment while you were speaking that they had a similar situation where the student aged out and they kept him as an unaccompanied youth and he was a special education student. A question from Maya, "What happens during the summer and during breaks? Who is the Point of Contact?"
- Matt Butensky: At this point, each LEA in the state is only required to have one Point of Contact. However, we have received questions from LEAs, which is understandable that there are going to be times when this Point of Contact is on vacation, is sick, is unavailable. So it would be something to consider to have a secondary designee. You don't necessarily need to input them into the directory at this time. However, it would be perhaps beneficial for your LEA to consider having a backup Point of

Contact for those times when your primary contact is not available or out of the office.

Karen Lehman: Matt, some of the questions are about where to locate a BID, how can they find a sample of an MOU, more about forms. Could you go over again where they can go to find the forms that they need to be compliant with this work?

Matt Butensky: Sure. PDE and DHS worked collaboratively and also received input from a group of stakeholders throughout the state to develop kind of a toolkit for this initiative. It included a sample Memorandum of Understanding, a sample transportation plan framework, a school placement, best interest determination form, a transportation guide, which assist with various transportation plan strategies and tips.

All resources can be found on pafostercare.org. There are also and should be available as part of this presentation hyperlinked and embedded throughout the slides. However, all of our current listing of resources, anything that's available right now has been housed on pafostercare.org. All future information including a directory of Points of Contact will also be found at pafostercare.org. Again, in the meantime, we do have a PDF of the Points of Contact and you can find that on the website, and also as part of this presentation.

Karen Lehman: Some additional questions have been coming in while Matt is talking, and because of the interest of time, we are going to make sure to respond to your questions individually. Again, if you didn't hear this earlier, whatever email address you used to register for today's webinar will be the one that Matt will use to respond to your question and provide answers.

His direct email address is on the PowerPoint, so please feel free to email Matt. Again, he's one person up against 700 LEAs that are submitting and have questions, so please be patient. But he's pretty timely in getting back to individuals.

You also have access to your regional coordinators, so don't forget that the map that Matt shared showed the regions on the website, the map is actually downloadable and it's two-sided. On the backside it has the contact information for the eight regional coordinators for the foster care initiative. They're available for answering questions and sharing information with you. If you're needing an answer, you can go to either Matt or the regional coordinators for assistance.

This concludes our session for today. We hope that you enjoyed the presentation. I'd like to thank Matt for sharing this information with us. It's a lot to absorb and take in, so thank you for your patience. Please take a moment to complete the survey that you'll receive via email when we close here. Be sure to save the attachments, the slides and you can use them for questions that you have later. Thank you for joining us, and have a great day.