Ensuring Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care and Experiencing Homelessness

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Content

- ESSA: Overview of Programs
  - McKinney-Vento
  - Foster Care
- Foster Care SLDS Updates
- Engaging Community Partners and Strengthening Program Models
- Questions/ Discussion
Questions for Consideration

- Which individuals within your community or school district do you partner with to ensure that needs for McKinney-Vento and Foster Care students are addressed?
- What are the top identified supports needed for students experiencing foster care and homelessness?
Support
Common barriers for students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care

- Unable to meet school enrollment requirements.
- Move around and change schools a lot.
- Hungry, tired, and stressed.
- Not have school supplies or a quiet place to study.
- Not have access to reliable transportation.
- Not have a parent or guardian to help them (unaccompanied youth).
- Be chronically absent from school.
- Get lower grades.
- Have special education needs.
- Score poorly on assessment tests.
- Drop out of school.
Support
Preventative Value of Education

- Children in quality preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school and own homes.

- High school graduation is associated with an array of positive live outcomes (↓ unemployment, ↓ criminal justice involvement, ↑ income, ↑ health outcomes, ↑ life span).

- 95%+ of the jobs created since the Great Recession have gone to workers with at least some post-secondary education.
McKinney-Vento and Foster Care Questions

- Develop one question that you have regarding support for students experiencing Foster Care or homelessness and add your post-it note(s) to the corresponding topic chart:
  - Student Identification
  - Immediate enrollment
  - Post-Secondary Guidance
  - Funding
  - Disputes
  - Partnerships and Collaboration
Pop Quiz: True or False?

1. Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a McKinney-Vento liaison.
3. McKinney-Vento students can stay in the same school, even if they move out of district.
5. McKinney-Vento does not apply to charter schools.
Overview of Programs

McKinney-Vento
Foster Care
ESSA Requirements and McKinney-Vento

- States must have procedures to eliminate barriers to academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs. 
  \[11432(g)(1)(F)(iii)\]

- LEAs should anticipate and accommodate the needs of McKinney-Vento students to enter these programs and consider giving them priority on waitlists. Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (Guidance)
ESSA Requirements and McKinney-Vento

- SEAs and LEAs should develop policies to expedite full participation in extracurricular activities and work with athletic associations to adjust policies to facilitate participation. *(Guidance p. 25)*

- LEAs must have procedures to ensure McKinney-Vento students receive appropriate full or partial credit, such as: consulting with prior school about partial coursework completed; evaluating students’ mastery of partly completed courses; offering credit recovery. *11432(1)(F)(ii); 11432(g)(6)(A)(x); Guidance O2*
ESSA Requirements and McKinney-Vento

- SEAs and LEAs should ensure school personnel consider issues related to homelessness prior to taking disciplinary action. *(Guidance p. 33)*

- SEAs and LEAs should provide training on the traumatic impacts of homelessness and how to provide trauma-informed support. *(Guidance p. 34)*
Pop Quiz: True or False?

1. Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a Foster Care Point of Contact.

2. Foster children caregivers may not access student records.

3. Foster Care students can stay in the same school, even if they move out of district.

4. Foster care youth are always eligible for McKinney-Vento.

5. The ESSA requirements regarding foster care youth do not apply to private schools.
ESSA Requirements: Foster Care

- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designed “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education.”

- Establishes support on behalf of foster youth through required child welfare and educational agency collaboration.
ESSA Requirements: Foster Care

- LEAs should collaborate with child welfare and other relevant agencies to ensure that all school staff are sensitive to the complex needs of foster youth, are informed about the impact that trauma has on a child’s ability to learn, and that the appropriate interventions and strategies are in place to support them to succeed in school.

- Agencies may consider opportunities to cross-train both child welfare agency and education staff on the importance of educational stability for children in foster care. *Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care.*
ESSA Requirements and Foster Care

Overview of Protections for Foster Care Students

- Required transportation plans between LEAs and child welfare agencies
- Immediate enrollment
- Foster Care students may remain in their current schools until a best interest determination is made
- Designated Point of Contact (POC) for Foster Care students at GaDOE
- All LEAs must have a POC for foster youth
- Removal of “awaiting foster care placement” from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Required data collection and reporting
Identification

Collaboration
• Develop relationships with DFCS ESMs, Case Workers, Foster Home Staff and CASAs.
• Have internal meetings with registrars, key personnel and Special Education staff.

Assessments
• Create and disseminate enrollment questionnaires to determine eligibility.
• Update student assessments regularly to capture progress, deficiencies and needs.

Best Practices
• Utilizing identification processes in place for McKinney-Vento Program.
• Observation of youth.
  • Behavioral Issues
  • Progress
LEA Points of Contact and Homeless Liaisons

LEA Points of Contact

- Develop plan for Best Interest determination
- Facilitate immediate enrollment and transfer of records
- Facilitate data sharing with appropriate agencies consistent with FERPA
- Coordination of transportation planning for foster care youth
- Lead professional development for school staff and administrators related to foster care

Homeless Liaisons

- Facilitate identification and immediate enrollment of McKinney-Vento students
- Coordinate student transportation needs
- Lead professional development for school administrators and school staff related to Homeless Education
- Coordinate comparable services and referrals to community partners on behalf of McKinney-Vento students and families
Support: College Access

Determiners of Student Homeless Status

- Local liaisons
  - Required under ESSA for graduating high school seniors
  - Allowed for college students through age 23 for whom liaisons have the needed information (June 2016 letter from Secretary King)

- Directors (or their designees) of shelters funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act or by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (student received services)

- College financial aid administrators (any student)
Support: College Access

Documenting Student Status

- For local liaisons and shelters
  Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Documentation of Independent Student Status for the FAFSA
  http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed

- For financial aid administrators
  Making Student Status Determinations for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Eligibility Tool for Financial Aid Administrators
  http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/faa_tool.php
Support: College Access

Accompanied Homeless Students

- Include parental information on the FAFSA
- Federal aid package is calculated based on the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and will reflect the family’s low-income status
- Understanding the EFC
Essa Data Collection

SLDS Updates

Offering a holistic education to each and every child in our state.
**ESSA: Data Collection Requirements**

**ESSA Disaggregated Subgroup Elements**

- Discipline (ISS, OSS, School related arrests, referrals to law enforcement and incidents of violence including bullying)
- Assessments (Assessed vs. Not Assessed)
- Attendance (including chronic absenteeism)
- Graduation Rates
- Academics (Accelerated coursework)

**Questions to Consider**

- Are these elements examined in your school or district?
- What unique actions are taken when discrepancy in achievement levels are discovered?
- Do you have the tools necessary to address gaps?
While the Foster Report is only available to District and School level staff, all staff (including teachers) with rights to view the student’s profile page will see a “Foster flag” on the student’s profile page in SLDS.

The Foster flag will either say “Currently in Foster Care” or “Not currently in Foster Care, but was at some point in current school year”.
Engaging Community Partners

Strategies
Collaborative Partnerships

Offering a holistic education to each and every child in our state.
Strategies to Strengthen Program Models

Collaborative Partnerships

- Formulate Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with local government agencies and nonprofits to facilitate services on behalf of McKinney-Vento and Foster Care youth (Fee waivers; transportation assistance; and field trips)

- Engage community partners with an LEA focused Community Collaborative (hosted and marketed as an Educational Collaborative)

- Consider establishing a shared office or desk space within the LEA District office for meetings with partners (DFCS; MAAC; CASA; Homeless Shelters; Childcare Facilities, Nonprofit Agencies)

- Establish a calendar for consultations to determine student needs and identify budgetary needs
Support: Strategies

Coordinate with Early Warning Systems for dropout prevention.

All Foster Care youth should have a case plan that includes their educational well-being and path for college or career through DFCS. Coordination with the LEA is required.

All McKinney-Vento youth must be able to receive individualized counseling from counselors to prepare and improve their readiness for college, including college selection, application, financial aid, and on-campus supports. 11432(g)(1)(K); Guidance Q1
Collaborative Partnerships: DFCS EPAC Unit Overview

- Utilizes certified teachers to assess youth in the areas of Math and Reading to determine what strengths and challenges the youth has. These certified teachers also provide tutoring services for youth if this support is not offered in the community or at the LEA.

- Consults with Case Managers and caregivers and if possible, communicates with teachers to determine an appropriate educational pathway for youth.

- Provides ongoing and timely support and educational training to Case Managers and Foster parents/Caregivers to ensure that youth are promoted and are making adequate progress towards graduation.

- Provides consultation and support to Case Managers and Caregivers when navigating through the RTI and IEP process.

- Provides consultation and support to Case Managers and Caregivers when navigating through the disciplinary process.

- Engages with community and DFCS partners to further support youth in care.
  - CASA
  - Georgia Appleseed
  - Georgia REACH
  - Georgia RYSE
  - Georgia Teenwork
Collaborative Strategies

Professional Development

- Consider use of an electronic training platform to increase the number of staff members who received McKinney-Vento and Foster Care Professional Development.

- Create a quarterly newsletter for McKinney-Vento and Foster Care and can be disseminated to principals, registration staff, and teachers.

- Host a poverty simulation or sensitivity training during annual meetings to bring awareness to McKinney-Vento and Foster Care and student needs.
## Collaborative Support

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<td>___ LEA to Student data sharing</td>
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<td>___ Inter-Agency agreements between SEA, LEA, DFCS, etc.</td>
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<td>___ LEA to Families/Unaccompanied Youth data sharing</td>
<td>___ Teachers/School Administrators</td>
<td>___ (Creative Suggestion):</td>
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<td>___ (Creative Suggestion):</td>
<td>___ Guidance Counselors/Student Support Personnel</td>
<td>___ (Creative Suggestion):</td>
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Resources

- GaDOE District Support Directory
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) Webpage
- NCHE Homeless Liaison Toolkit
- Schoolhouse Connection Webpage
- Foster Care Non-Regulatory Guidance
Resources

- Office of Inspector General Residential Child Care Search
- GaDOE Professional Learning Opportunities Modules
- GaDOE Fed Talks Podcast
- DFCS EPAC Webpage
Discussion
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