April 16, 2020

RE: ESSA and Foster Population during COVID-19 Executive Orders

Good Afternoon, All Local School POCs!

We would like to thank you for your efforts to support the educational outcomes of Indiana’s youth, and specifically those who are in foster care, during this unique and challenging time.  While we are still bound to the requirements of ESSA to collaborate with each other to determine the educational best interests when a child is placed into foster care or home placement has changed while in care, I wanted to share with you the guidance I have offered to the DCS Staff to ensure that we are maintaining educational stability for students in foster care, and keeping them in their school of origin to the extent possible.

We have reminded of the need to send the school notification ([SF47412](https://forms.in.gov/Download.aspx?id=8319)), in line with [DCS Policy 8.22](https://www.in.gov/dcs/files/8.22%20School%20Notifications%20and%20Legal%20Settlement.pdf), to the local school POCs.  However, unless there is significant justification to transfer a child to a new school, we are currently recommending that all children remain enrolled in their school of origin until schools reopen.  At that time, we will then review the child’s educational best interests to determine whether a change of school setting is necessary.  This is an effort to minimize any challenges that may arise for our youth to learn another method of remote learning and connect with new school staff through remote platforms.  We are recommending that all school issued devices move with the child and will work with you to ensure they are returned at the end of the school year.  If they are lost or damaged due to this, we have policy to ensure the school is reimbursed, just as we normally would per [DCS Policy 8.20](https://www.in.gov/dcs/files/8.20%20Educational%20Services.pdf).

We have also learned that some schools have decided to use the waiver days our governor granted to end their school year earlier than planned.  It would be most helpful if you would contact your local Education Consultant/ESSA POC to identify if your school has implemented this plan, so we can be sure our local office staff are aware of the change. I have included the most current map of our Education Services team and contact information here.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or your DOE ESSA State POC, Jeff Wittman.  We are always happy to help!

Happy Day!
Melaina

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