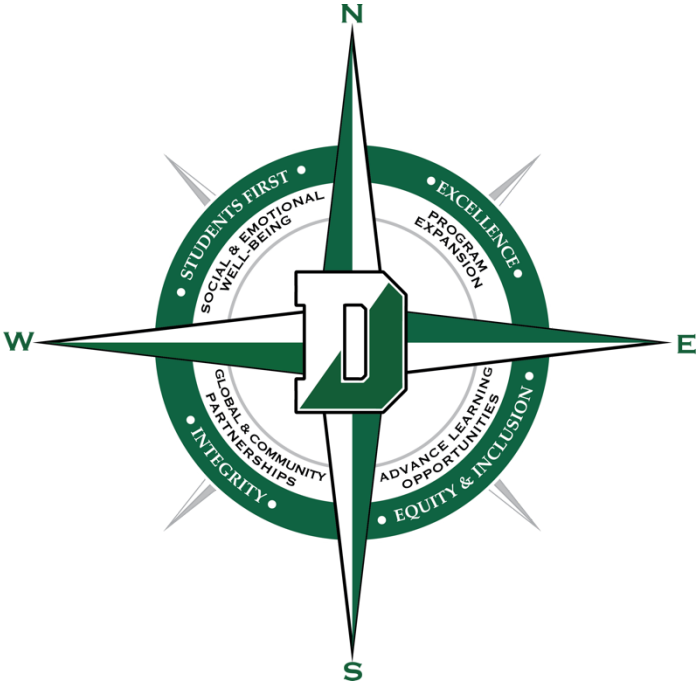


Duxbury Public Schools



Foster Care Guidebook

October 2022

The Duxbury Public Schools does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs and activities on the basis of race, hair traits associated with race, color, sex, national origin, disability, age, homelessness, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The school makes every reasonable effort to provide easy physical access through the use of ramps and elevators. Ample handicapped parking is clearly identified. Handicapped bathrooms are located on each floor. Individuals in wheelchairs are easily accommodated throughout the building and for transportation needs.

All educational programs and services are advertised and open to all individuals, students, staff, and parents/guardians. Program offerings seek to eliminate bias and encourage full opportunities for all. Program modifications allow for participation of students with disabilities. Pregnant students are provided access to regular education classes and activities during their pregnancy. All co-curricular activities are offered in a non-discriminatory manner. All scholarships, prizes, and awards are free from bias and discrimination.

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Overview

Pursuant to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title I, Part A, students considered to be in foster care must be provided with educational stability and equal access to the same free and public education as provided to all other students.

Definitions

The following terms come from the DESE's training, "Orientation to Educational Stability", as presented on October 29, 2019.¹

Students in Foster Care

Students who are in 24-hour out-of-home care placed away from their parents or guardians, and for whom the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has placement and care responsibilities. This includes students previously identified as "awaiting foster care" (in emergency short-term placements) under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. The types of placement where a student in foster care might be placed are foster homes, group homes, kinship foster homes, Short-Term Assessment and Rapid Reunification (STARR) programs, and Transitional Care Units (TCUs).

School of Origin

The school of origin is defined as the school the student was attending when placed in foster care or at the time of a subsequent change in foster care placement. Students should remain in their school of origin in order to maintain educational stability unless after a best interest determination it is decided to not be in the student's best interest not to.

Local School

The local school refers to the school or district of the community to which the foster care placement is located.

¹ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/foster/>

Best Interest Determination

Best Interest Determinations (BID)² are collaborative meetings involving a wide variety of stakeholders such as DCF case managers, social workers, educational decision-makers, school of origin, local school, and other parties best situated to understand the student's unique needs. The focus of the BID is to decide what school the student will attend following placement into foster care or a subsequent change in placement. After engaging in meaningful dialogue, the goal would be that we come to a consensus on the student's placement. However, if consensus cannot be arrived at then the ultimate decision regarding placement is made by DCF. Students are expected to remain in their school of origin until the BID is held.

Notice to Local Education Agency

When DCF alerts our district regarding a student in foster care, DCF should be providing us with a Notice to Local Education Agency (LEA). This document identifies pertinent information such as DCF case manager contact information, details regarding the student's placement, and information

Foster Care Point of Contact

Each district is required to have a Foster Care Point of Contact. This individual is responsible for managing the local or school of origin's participation in the BID and management of the formal identification of students in foster care within Aspen and the DESE's Foster Care portal. The Foster Care Point of Care must be contacted whenever a student is thought to be in foster care, if a change of foster care placement is made, for all transportation needs, and all other matters pertaining uniquely to a student in foster care. The Foster Care Point of Contact provides the final determination as to a student's status in foster care. The goal of the Foster Care Point of Contact is to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care.

The Foster Care Point of Contact for the Duxbury Public School is Dr. Elizabeth Wilcox.

Dr. Elizabeth Wilcox
93 Chandler Street
Duxbury, MA 02332
ewilcox@duxbury.k12.ma.us
(o) 781-934-7600 ext. 2912

² MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and MA Department of Children and Families. (2018) *Educational stability for students in foster care.*

District Procedure and Expectations

The following local procedure will be followed for all students in foster care.

Identification and Communication

If a faculty or staff member becomes aware that a student is in 24-hour out-of-home care away from their parents or guardians and for whom DCF has placement and care responsibilities, said faculty and staff must immediately notify the district's Foster Care Point of Contact. Notification to the Foster Care Point of Contact is done by completing a [Foster Care Intake Form](#). This form may be submitted electronically through sharing via Google or scanning to email.

Conducting a Best Interest Determination and the Expected Outcomes

BID are facilitated by the district's Foster Care Point of Contact. Parties that have the knowledge to support making an informed decision regarding what is best for a student in foster care will be invited to the meeting or, minimally, be consulted to obtain vital information. The results of a BID will lead to determining where the student will enroll. The following are the potential outcomes of a BID:

- If the student is placed in our community, then the student is entitled to enroll in our district since we are the local district.
- If a Duxbury student enters foster care and is placed in another community, the student may enroll in that local district or be transported to continue attending school in Duxbury. With educational stability being the goal, remaining in the school of origin is preferred.

Enrolling in Duxbury

If a student in foster care is placed in our community, then the student is entitled to enroll in our district since we are the local district. Said student will be enrolled immediately without waiting to receive the typical enrollment documentation such as proof of residency, academic records, IEPs, medical records, etc. In order to enroll a student in foster care the DCF case manager will present the Notice to LEA, along with their state agency identification badge. Students in foster care that enrolled in Duxbury are entitled to free breakfast and lunch.

Transportation of Students in Foster Care

Students in foster care who are locally enrolled, unless noted in an IEP, will follow the district's guidelines for transportation to and from school.

Students who are placed in a community other than Duxbury are entitled to transportation in order to remain in their school of origin. Transportation will be arranged by the district's Foster Care Point of Contact. Any questions or concerns regarding transportation should be directed to the district's Foster Care Point of Contact.

If a student in foster care is being transported to and from school using specialized transportation and they are not in need of transportation due to absence, dismissal, etc., every effort should be made to cancel the route or portion of the route as needed. Failure to do so results in the district being billed unnecessarily for transportation that is not needed.

Changes in Foster Care Status

If a student's status in foster care changes in any way, it is important to let the district's Foster Care Point of Contact know. Changes in status could mean a change of foster care placement, reunification with a parent or legal guardian, or changes to their status with DCF. Such changes may be communicated via email to the district's Foster Care Point of Contact.

Foster Care Portal and Identification in Aspen

Students in foster care are to be added to DESE's Homeless and Foster Care portal and are to be identified in Aspen as needed for state reporting. The primary responsibility for completing this task is with the district's Foster Care Point of Contact and is supported by the district's Student Information Specialist.