



Dear Partners in Education,

November 30, 2017

OPI Guidance on the changes in foster care requirements under ESSA:

All LEAs are under obligation to transport foster care children as of Dec. 10, 2016. The OPI worked with DPHHS to identify LEAs with high numbers of foster care youth (they correspond to the districts with high numbers of homeless youth). The OPI provided direct technical assistance to those districts to make sure they were aware of the potential numbers of foster care children that they were dealing with and to make sure that those students had school of origin and transportation rights in place. The OPI worked directly with upper management in the Child and Family Services Division to make them aware of these changes, and continues to work as a liaison between social workers and LEAs to arrange transportation and enrollment for foster care youth. The OPI appreciates that all districts in Montana are complying with transportation requests, and are making every attempt to maintain students in their school of origin as long as that school is within the 60 mile/1 hour transportation limit under state code.

Please visit the website for further information:

<http://opi.mt.gov/Neglected-Delinquent-Youth-Foster-Care-Families-Students>

Further work being done in the foster care program at the OPI:

- Working with DPHHS and the CFS Division to share information. They provide us with the names of all students and we mark those in the state database, which allows all LEAs to have access to a report listing their enrolled foster care youth. This centralized system for identification eliminates the need for local child welfare agencies and LEAs to create MOUs.

- Developing data dashboards to allow the public to access data on foster care youth, including achievement and graduation data. This dashboard will be similar to our [data dashboard for homeless students](#).
- Providing direct assistance to social workers. DPHHS staff provide workshops at the State Title I Conference on foster care issues.
- The OPI coordinates foster care, homeless, and juvenile justice services to the extent possible recognizing that many children move between these three systems.
- Working closely with our Indian Education programs, and with tribal agencies whenever possible, to insure that LEAs are providing culturally responsive services to all American Indian youth. The foster care, homeless, and Title I D programs at the State level all include requirements around culturally responsive services for American Indian youth.

For further information or questions regarding serving our foster care students under ESSA please reach out to:

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Foster Care Point of Contact

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Please send questions to ESSAinput@mt.gov