

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY GUIDEBOOK



SECOND EDITION

OUR VISION

We envision a safe and positive future for all Texas children.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Texas CASA is to support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children in the child protection system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE



a TEXAS CENTER FOR THE JUDICIARY grant program



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WELCOME

Take a moment and think back on some of the people in your life that made a difference for you and your education.

Maybe you had a teacher who went that extra mile – stayed with you after school to help with homework, listened to your worries and gave you the encouragement and support that allowed you to keep going. Or perhaps it was a relative – a grandparent, or an aunt or uncle, even an older sibling – someone whose comfort and guidance you could seek when life got a little too rough. An advocate takes on many forms, but those of us who make it through successfully can almost always point to at least one person who made the difference.

As a well-trained and dedicated CASA volunteer, you can play that role for children in the child welfare system.

It's no secret that the odds are stacked against children in foster care in many ways, including when it comes to educational success. Texas CASA's Educational Advocacy Guidebook is specifically developed to help CASA volunteers like you ensure that your CASA child defeats those odds and receives the right services to meet their individual needs and, ultimately, their educational goals. This guidebook looks at how the education and child welfare systems intersect and provides you with the most up-to-date information and tools to help you make a difference in the school setting.

Our hope with this guidebook is to give you the baseline knowledge and tools you need to identify education-related challenges experienced by your CASA child and to advocate effectively to overcome them. You already have the passion – now you just need the information that will enable you to provide caring support, and fight logically and systematically for a child's rights in systems that can sometimes unknowingly overlook them.

We at Texas CASA have an uncompromising belief in **The CASA Way**: We will achieve what others think is impossible, and each of us is an essential part of the solution. Whatever their circumstances, there is no limit to what children can accomplish when they have a dedicated, informed, fierce advocate by their side. Thank you for being a part of the solution, and for helping our most vulnerable children and youth not just to survive, but to *thrive*.

Vicki Spriggs
Texas CASA CEO



"Whatever their circumstances, there is no limit to what children can accomplish when they have a dedicated, informed, fierce advocate by their side."

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HOW TO USE THE EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY GUIDEBOOK

Like the child welfare system, the education system is complex, and we understand that you may not have the time to read lengthy manuals or do in-depth research on these topics. With that in mind, we designed this guidebook to be a **quick and concise resource**. The icons are designed to help you easily locate key information and tools.

The first chapter, Educational Challenges for Children in Foster Care, provides the context and the “why” you need to get started. After that, we encourage you to **explore this guidebook on your own terms**, and skip to the chapter that has the information you are looking for at the moment. Wherever possible, we have also included additional resources should you need to explore beyond the basic steps.

ICONS USED IN THIS GUIDEBOOK



The **laws, regulations and codes icon** alerts you to important laws, regulations and codes that apply to the subject of the guidebook.



The **tool icon** gives you tools, such as checklists and tables, to support you and make your advocacy easier.



The **tip icon** indicates quick pointers and suggestions that make complicated issues more understandable.



CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Statistics: Why Is Educational Advocacy So Important?
- Challenges with Placement & Stability
- The Impact of Childhood Trauma
- The Need for Normalcy

CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Children in foster or substitute care may have unique educational needs. As a CASA volunteer, you should be aware of how contact with the child welfare system could potentially affect a child's education.

Statistics: Why Is Educational Advocacy So Important?

- Students in foster care experience educational instability and lag behind the general student population in high school completion.¹
- The percentage of students in foster care receiving special education services (24%) is almost three times that of students not in care (9%).²
- The percentage of students in foster care who receive out-of-school suspension (16%) is more than three times that of students not in care (5%).³
- The percentage of students in foster care who attended two or more schools in one school year (47%) is 6.5 times that of students not in care (7%).⁴
- The average 17-18 year old in foster care reads at a seventh grade level.⁵
- The national data shows that 2-9% of youth formerly in foster care attain a bachelor's degree.⁶

Challenges with Placement & Stability

Children who grow up in the child welfare system face a number of obstacles and challenges related to their ability to access a high quality education and attain their educational goals. This situation is the result of a number of things:

- Frequent school changes as the children move from home to home and sometimes community to community
- Cross-system breakdowns that prevent smooth transitions between homes and schools
- Deficits in school readiness as a result of frequently traumatic and/or neglectful home experiences prior to entering foster care
- Higher rates of school dropout, truancy and disciplinary issues than their peers
- Lack of a consistent education advocate to ensure that the children receive all necessary services and supports

That's where you come in.

The Impact of Childhood Trauma⁷

Trauma and stressful childhood experiences may impact students' learning, behavior and socialization. Many youth experience grief and loss associated with not only the alleged abuse or neglect and traumatic

experiences that brought them into the foster care system, but also the removal from all they care about, know and love. As a result of this trauma, students in foster care may show signs of depression or anxiety and may have trouble trusting adults and socializing with their peers. Children in foster care have experienced tremendous loss by being separated from parents, siblings, personal belongings and their friends and teachers at school; and this trauma may have a significant effect on their ability to do well in school.

The Need for Normalcy

For many children in foster care, school provides a safe environment and a chance to feel normal. Familiarity with teachers, coaches and friends as well as the chance to learn and excel creates a unique opportunity to support and encourage a child in crisis. In addition, every child learns differently, so it is important to continue to surround the student with people who are familiar with their unique needs. To maximize social and academic progress, the student should continue in the same school whenever possible, despite disruptions in the child's home life.



The **Fostering Connections Act of 2008** is a federal law that emphasizes the importance of school stability and maintaining the child in the school in which they were enrolled at the time of placement.⁸ The act also requires child protective agencies to take into account the appropriateness of the current education setting and proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. In addition, if remaining in the same school is not in the child's best interest, the child welfare agency and school districts must work together to ensure immediate enrollment and transfer all of the child's education records to the new school. This law prompted Texas and other states to also sign school stability provisions into state law.⁹ For these reasons, when making a recommendation regarding your CASA child's living arrangements – especially if those arrangements need to change – you should always take the child's school into account.

The **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** became law in **December 2015**, making clear that school stability is the responsibility of both the education and child welfare systems.¹⁰ ESSA mirrors the school stability protections in Fostering Connections and added requirements related to transportation, points of contact, and data. Transportation is still a challenge in Texas, but CASA volunteers can help develop creative solutions to help maintain school stability. For more information, see the Texas Education Agency ESSA Foster Care Preliminary Implementation Q&A: https://tea.texas.gov/ESSAfostercare_qa.pdf.

Final Thoughts

Now that you understand the challenges facing the children you serve, it is imperative that you educate yourself about the necessary aspects of the education system that affect your case.

To best advocate on your case, make sure you have the information and necessary resources available so that you can share the special challenges your CASA child faces with teachers, coaches, counselors and school administrators.





CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Important Education Information Advocates Should Know
- Confidentiality Concerns
- Confidentiality Do's & Don'ts

CHAPTER TWO

WORKING WITH TEXAS SCHOOLS

The following information is intended to help you initiate positive relationships with school personnel and ensure that the educational needs of your CASA child are being addressed.

Important Education Information Advocates Should Know

There are more than 1,200 independent school districts operating more than 8,000 public schools, including charter schools, in the state of Texas. School districts and charter schools are run independently. Although there are legal requirements for all school districts, there is also a significant amount of local control, which creates a wide variety of policies and practices across Texas schools. It is helpful to ask questions and clarify policies, practices and expectations, and to not assume one school operates the same as another.

Terminology differs between child protection and education.

School personnel may refer to the school district as the Local Education Agency (LEA). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) may also be referred to as the State Education Agency (SEA). Child Protective Services (CPS) uses the term placement to describe where the child is living. Educators use the term placement to describe special education settings.

School personnel may be unfamiliar with CPS or CASA. Take the opportunity to increase awareness and educate school personnel about CASA and CPS. Part of your work as a CASA volunteer is to educate people about the foster care system, your role, and the unique challenges children and youth in substitute care may face.

If your CASA child needs to move, planning for and scheduling a school change requires that several important things be considered. Every district has its own calendar for holidays, testing dates and grading periods, as well as its own policies and requirements for things such as how credits are transferred and graduation.¹¹ This makes it critical for the CASA volunteer to look into the impact and timing of a school move on the grading period/course credit, testing, or other important educational milestones that may affect the student. CASA has the opportunity to inform the school and court about the move and consult with others about the impact of the move on the student's education. Consulting with the school will also help to determine what is academically best for the student.

Every school district and open enrollment charter school is required to appoint a foster care liaison.¹²

This person helps facilitate the enrollment and transfer of records for children in the legal custody of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) when enrolling or changing schools. More broadly, foster care liaisons are working in new ways and various capacities to support their districts in implementing policy, practice and training that addresses the education of students in foster care. To find out who to contact in your school district, visit <https://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/liaisons/>.

School testing and state assessments are important for measuring student progress, learning needs and advancement. Make sure that students are present for mandated testing and receive proper support leading up to and after testing.



Many education laws exist to support students in foster care. It is important that you are familiar with the various laws that exist to advance the education of students in foster care. Informed advocates can ensure that students are familiar with and take advantage of the numerous laws, policies and resources that are available to support students in Texas schools. To see a comprehensive list of education laws and other resources, visit TEA's Foster Care & Student Success Laws Webpage at <https://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/laws/>.¹³

Educators are advocates, too. Teaming with schools is an important part of your work. School personnel are tremendous resources and supports for your student, and many opportunities exist within the education community. Work to build relationships with your partners in the school setting to leverage these resources and opportunities for your CASA child.

Confidentiality Concerns

Federal confidentiality laws govern how information goes back and forth between CPS and schools.

In light of the extreme stress and trauma children in foster care may endure, it is of the utmost importance that you also respect the confidentiality of information related to your CASA child. When talking to the teachers and counselors, you need to consider the direct educational relevance of things you relay to the school.

- For example, it might be relevant to share that the child may exhibit behavioral issues on Tuesdays because the child visits his or her father on Mondays. However, it is probably inappropriate to share any details about the visit or why the child came into foster care in the first place.
- It may be helpful to share sensitivities or potential triggers (for example, Mother's Day activities), sibling visits, medications or other factors that might impact a student's school day, behavior, focus or learning ability.
- You also need to coordinate your information sharing with the caseworker and the education decision maker when possible.

In 2017, the TEA, DFPS and the Children's Commission created a guidance document to assist with this issue, *Information Sharing Between Child Welfare and Schools: Maintaining Privacy and Promoting Educational Success*, available online at <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/83653/confidentiality-guide-fall-2017-final.pdf>.



Schools are required to safeguard the privacy of students' education records. The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Generally, schools must have parental consent to release personally identifiable student record information, although there are certain exceptions.¹⁴

A court order is often the most applicable FERPA exception for a CASA volunteer to use to get school records for children in foster care since there is already an open court case. Your access to a student's educational records is typically established by the court order that names you as a CASA or as a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for the child and includes language about who can access the child's records. CASA volunteers should always double check to make sure the court has granted them access to the student's records.

Under the **Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA)**, which amended FERPA in 2013, the school district is permitted to share educational records directly with the caseworker when DFPS has been named the child's conservator and the child is in foster care. The school does not have to provide additional notice to the child's parent.¹⁵ The USA also allows CPS caseworkers to relay that school information to the court with a court order and without the need for parental consent. The USA did not change the fact that this information is highly sensitive and should be maintained in a responsible and confidential way. For more information, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/uninterrupted-scholars-act-guidance.pdf>.

On the CPS side, the **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)** defines child abuse and neglect and prohibits the improper disclosure of child welfare records.

Confidentiality Do's & Don'ts



It is generally appropriate to share the following types of information with relevant school personnel:

- DFPS Form 2085E, the Designation of Education Decision-Maker Form, and Form 2085, the Placement Authorization Form
- The fact that the child is in foster care or in a relative or kinship placement
- The child's current address
- The CPS caseworker's contact information
- The child's birth certificate or other identification
- Previous schools the child has attended
- Transcripts and report cards
- Special Education or 504 eligibility, including any admission, review and dismissal (ARD) meeting report, individualized education program (IEP) report, or behavior intervention plan (BIP)
- Immunizations and vision or hearing evaluations
- Medicaid eligibility or number, if necessary for services

Based on a case-by-case determination, it may also be appropriate to share:

- Relevant court orders
- Abuse or neglect history, when directly related to the child's education needs
- Contact information for the biological family
- Relevant medical, disability or health history
- Mental or behavioral health issues
- Medications, including psychotropic medications
- Social history
- History with law enforcement or juvenile justice

It is NEVER appropriate to share:

- Alcohol or substance abuse disorder (SUD) and/or treatment¹⁶
- The fact that the child was adopted
- The name of the person who reported the abuse or neglect
- CPS investigation details
- Biological or foster family income

Final Thoughts

The first thing to do when it comes to educational advocacy is get acclimated to the school and situation of the child or children from your case. The next chapter will provide a checklist of what you will need to do when going to the school for the first time.

Don't forget that the educators you will be interacting with likely entered the education arena because they care about children. They also are faced with the same type of challenge as a CPS worker: too many kids in their classes and not enough time. You have the advantage of being the CASA for one child or one or two cases.



CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Who Makes Education Decisions for Children & Youth in Foster Care?
- Education Roles & Responsibilities
- The Role of CASA as the Education Advocate

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY 101

There are many people involved in the education of a child in foster care. Read on to find out who is involved in your CASA child's education, define your role as the CASA volunteer and learn how to work collaboratively to help meet the child's educational needs.

Who Makes Education Decisions for Children & Youth in Foster Care?

Depending on the child's needs and age, different people may participate in making education-related decisions including the CPS caseworker, school staff, the education decision maker, the caregiver, the surrogate parent (if the child is receiving special education services), the child and the CASA volunteer. Since CASA might serve in one or more of these roles, depending on how the CASA is appointed in the case, it is very important for CASA volunteers to define their role and work with everyone involved to get the best educational outcome for the child.

The Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS)

If DFPS is awarded Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC) or Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC), DFPS is legally responsible for all decisions related to the child, including those that involve education.¹⁷ Although DFPS can delegate some day-to-day decision-making authority regarding education to the child's caretaker or others, it always retains the decision making authority to determine where the child will attend school.

Education Decision Maker (EDM)

The education decision maker (EDM) is the person designated by DFPS to make day-to-day education-related decisions. This might include enrolling in school, making course selections, signing permission slips, attending parent-teacher conferences, addressing disciplinary actions and providing the school every year with the opt-out form related to corporal punishment. Most of the time, the EDM is the caretaker, whether that is a relative or foster parent or residential staff.



CASA can play an important role in communicating with the school and the EDM by helping to provide consistency all around and communicating with everyone involved. This may be particularly helpful if a student moves and the EDM changes.



DFPS must notify the child's school and the court, within five days of an adversary hearing, of the name and contact information for the EDM. If the EDM changes, DFPS must contact the school within five days and include updated information in the permanency progress report.¹⁸ DFPS created Form 2085E to clearly state who is responsible for making all school-related decisions. To see a sample, visit http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/site_map/forms.asp.

Surrogate Parent

State and federal law requires that the school appoint a “surrogate parent” for each child who is in foster care that receives special education services and does not have a biological parent, foster parent, or other person acting in the capacity of a parent. Courts can also appoint surrogate parents. For greater detail on the role of the surrogate parent, see Chapter 6. If known to CPS, Form 2085E identifies the surrogate parent for a child receiving special education services. Often, the EDM and the surrogate parent are the same person, but this is not always the case.

Education Roles & Responsibilities¹⁹

CPS	Caregiver	EDM	CASA
Accesses school records and creates and maintains education portfolio	Helps to maintain education portfolio	Accesses school records and education portfolio	Accesses school records and education portfolio
Selects school	Takes care of the everyday needs of the child	May enroll child in school and/or provide school with 2085E form on an annual basis	Advocates for child’s educational needs and goals to be met
Receives notice of disciplinary action and special education (ARD) meetings	May have more duties if chosen to be the EDM or surrogate parent	Receives notice of disciplinary action and special education (ARD) meetings	Reports on educational issues at every Chapter 263 hearing
Ensures opt-out of corporal punishment form is submitted if district allows corporal punishment		Opts out in writing of corporal punishment in school, obtains report cards and approves field trips; determines (with the child if appropriate) course selection, etc.	

The Role of CASA as the Education Advocate



Legal duties under the **Texas Family Code (TFC)**:

- The Guardian ad Litem has a right to access the child's records, including child welfare and school records.²⁰ Anyone who is granted access to the records has a continuing duty to maintain confidentiality and not re-disclose the information improperly.²¹
- The CASA volunteer must determine before every status and permanency review hearing whether the child's educational needs and goals have been identified and addressed.²²
- At every permanency review hearing, the court will determine whether the child's educational needs and goals have been identified and addressed.²³



CASA Volunteer Roles & Responsibilities

- Share a copy of the initial court order appointing CASA on the case (found in your case file) with the school. Many schools will not allow you access to the child's records without this documentation.
- Become an expert on your CASA child's educational needs. Inform yourself about your CASA child's education rights and entitlements. Monitor whether their educational needs are being met.
- Seek to build collaboration with school personnel when advocating for the child.
- Communicate regularly with your CASA child. Be a consistent presence in their life, especially during a placement or school move.
- Write thorough court reports that make your CASA child's educational needs clear.
- If there is a possibility of a school change, talk to the caseworker and the court about your thoughts or concerns. Be sure to relay all critical information that could affect a school move, such as upcoming test dates or key extracurricular events.
- CASA volunteers should review the Education Portfolio and make sure that it is up to date.
- There are many ways a CASA volunteer can advocate in the school setting regarding credit transfer, appropriate classes, special education evaluation, discipline, extracurricular involvement, endorsements and graduation plans. For more information about these issues, explore the following chapters of this guidebook.

Possible Additional Roles & Responsibilities of the CASA Volunteer

- If designated as the education decision maker (see Form 2085E), your role is to make education-related decisions for the child in lieu of the child's caregiver. This role is not typically assigned to the CASA volunteer, but may be under certain circumstances.
- If you are not designated as the EDM, you still need to work closely with the foster parent and/ or kinship caregiver to ensure that the child is having a successful school experience as measured by progress reports, as well as staff, student and caregiver feedback.
- A CASA volunteer may also be designated as a surrogate parent by the school or the court if the child receives special education services.²⁴ This role will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.



Some Practices to Consider²⁵

- Attend ARD meetings if possible.
- Support students in areas of interest – communicate with students about their goals and interests and help connect them to opportunities that support this whenever possible.
- Mentor students – provide support for home, school and family concerns.
- Connect students with school staff mentors. CASA can't be at school every day, but a school campus mentor can be.
- Encourage positive behavior and work completion. This helps to reinforce teacher and foster parent rules.
- Help students with accepting responsibility and following through.
- Monitor behavior reinforcement systems. Make sure the child's school and home follow through on positive behavior systems and plans.





The school will expect to see a court order before disclosing personal information about the student. The school likely will also ask for identification such as a driver's license to run through its campus visitor security system.

Final Thoughts

Below are some recommendations to help you be the best possible education advocate within your role.

- Do your homework and ask questions. Education law, policy and practice may be complicated if you aren't familiar with the Texas Education Code, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other laws and guidelines.
- Build relationships with your CASA child's teachers, DFPS caseworkers, counselors, caregivers and school leaders.
- Keeping confidentiality in mind, make sure that teachers, principals, counselors, judges and any other key players have up-to-date information at all times. Ask yourself what you can do to make the school's job easier.
- Be consistent in your involvement.
- Coordinate with the caseworker, school and attorney ad litem to minimize disruption at the school.
- Ask the school counselor and teacher how you can help.
- Identify the foster care liaison in the district where your CASA child is enrolled.
- Remember that you play a significant role in gathering and providing information to the court and helping the child navigate through multiple systems.



CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The Importance of Stability
- Enrollment
- Records Transfer
- Credit Transfer

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

When a child must change schools, there are a number of steps you can take as a CASA volunteer to ensure a smooth transfer and lessen the negative effects of the move.

The Importance of Stability

In some cases, an appropriate foster home is not available to meet a child's needs in the child's school attendance zone or the child's school district, or the child is placed with a family member in another school district. In those cases, it may be necessary for the child to change placements and attend a different school.



Find out if any placements are available that would allow the child to continue attending their current school. If no placements are available in the school's "zone of attendance," ask about transportation options to see if your CASA child may stay at the same school.

Most placement moves require a change in schools, and students average a four to six-month loss in emotional and academic growth for each school move.²⁶ Students in foster care not only suffer the loss of emotional and social connections but may also lose course credits, repeat courses they have already taken, and/or be placed in inappropriate classes or grade levels.



Texas law allows a student in DFPS conservatorship who is placed at a residence outside the attendance area for the school or the school district to continue attending the school the child was enrolled in at the time of each placement.²⁷ The student may attend the school without payment of tuition until the child completes the highest grade offered at the school, even if the child exits DFPS conservatorship.²⁸ However, this law does not address related transportation issues which could make it impractical to stay in the school of origin.

School changes may be inevitable for many children in foster care, but there are a number of steps you can take as a CASA volunteer to ensure a seamless transfer between schools and lessen the impact of the school move on the child. When it is necessary for a child to change schools, as a CASA volunteer, you can provide additional help by making sure the child is quickly enrolled in the new school and their education records are transferred.

Enrollment



The **Texas Education Code** states that students in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment when arriving at a new school, regardless of whether they have the necessary documentation and paperwork.²⁹ DFPS must enroll a child in school within three days of the child being placed in care or moving to a new placement³⁰ and provide all necessary enrollment paperwork to the new school within 30 days of the child's initial enrollment,³¹ but these requirements are typically delegated to the EDM.

As mentioned earlier, the foster care liaison appointed for each school district and open enrollment charter school is there to facilitate withdrawal, record transfers and enrollment, and support students in successful transitions with all of their credits transferred to the new school. Contact your district's foster care liaison to learn more.

The Texas Department of Health has indicated that public schools must extend "provisional enrollment" to students in foster care who do not have proper immunization records upon enrollment. A student may be enrolled while a course of immunizations are being administered as promptly as medically appropriate.



Previously, a child "awaiting foster care placement" met the federal **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act)** definition of homeless, and the child was entitled to attend the school that the child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled, with transportation and other services provided by the district.³² ESSA amended the McKinney-Vento Act, and effective December 10, 2016, "awaiting foster care placement" was removed from the definition of homeless since protections for children awaiting foster care placement are now included in ESSA.

Students under McKinney-Vento may receive school transportation services to and from their school of origin, participation in the National Lunch Program, tutoring, fee exemptions for certain assessments (PSAT, SAT, ACT) and additional student supports. Each school district has a McKinney-Vento liaison to assist with enrollment and placement of homeless youth.³³

For more information on services for homeless youth, visit:

- Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716updated0317.pdf>
- Texas Homeless Education Office: <http://www.utdanacenter.org/theo/>
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE): <https://nche.ed.gov/about.php>

Records Transfer³⁴

Without a student's records, it is difficult for a school to provide the right services and instruction. A fast and efficient transition will lessen the negative effects of a school move.

- Because of a FERPA exception, even if a caregiver or foster parent did not formally withdraw the student from the previous school, enrollment by a student in another school district provides authority for the original school district to release the educational records of that student to the new school, regardless of whether parental or caregiver consent has been received.³⁵
- Schools are required to transfer records within **10 working days** after the date of enrollment.³⁶ The Texas Student Records Exchange (TREx) is the system that facilitates records exchange of all student records across Texas. When a student moves from one Texas public school district or charter school to another, the student record must be transferred via TREx. Follow up to ensure this happens on time. Also, ask the school if you might be able to assist with the transfer of records. Providing hard copies of a student's records may help expedite enrollment. Sharing education-related information with the new school will help to facilitate and streamline enrollment.
- Each school-age child in foster care (grades pre-kindergarten-12th) has a green binder called an **education portfolio**. The portfolio follows the child from placement to placement and includes education-related documents and information. Follow up with the caseworker and caregivers to ensure the education portfolio is up to date. Consult with the caseworker about which documents from the education portfolio may and should be provided to the school. For more information, see Appendix B.



As a CASA volunteer, it is important that you build relationships. In the event that a school district resists efforts to enroll a child in transition, the CPS education specialist and foster care liaisons may be able to help with enforcing rights and resources afforded by the law.



Texas public schools failing to provide the required information within 10 calendar days of a written request by the receiving district should be reported to the TREx Help Desk: (512) 463-7246 or TREx@tea.texas.gov. Also, if there is a problem, notify the DFPS education specialist in your region.

Credit Transfer

Principals/school committees and boards have a range of authority to develop local credit recovery and transfer policies.

TEA has a policy that credits earned toward state graduation requirements by a student in an accredited school district must be accepted by another school district in the state.³⁷

As a CASA volunteer, you should coordinate with the school registrar and district foster care liaison to ensure no credits have been lost and that the child is placed in the proper grade level. Communicate regularly with the school and follow up to make sure the child is properly withdrawn from the previous school to facilitate the credit transfer process.

When possible, check the school calendar and advocate for required moves after the end of the semester or grading period. Be mindful of state-mandated examinations, college admission test schedules and Advanced Placement (AP) exam schedules.

Final Thoughts

Although you will not be responsible for enrolling your CASA child in school, it is very important that you understand the process so that you can advocate when necessary. Ask these questions:

- Where does the child want to go to school?
- What does the child say about their school?
- What setting will best serve the child's educational needs and goals?
- Is everyone involved aware of the child's strengths and interests?
- Is the child progressing academically and on grade level?
- Does the child need additional school support?
- Is the new school aware of the previous services and supports received by the child?
- Can the new school continue to provide the same services and supports as the previous school?
- Is the current school setting a safe place for the child?
- Were the records transferred?
- Are the records complete?
- Did the child receive credit for previous coursework?
- What are the transportation options?



If you need help or more information, contact the school district foster care liaison (<http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/liasons/>) or DFPS regional education specialist (https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/State_Care/education_specialists.asp).



CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Attendance
- Behavioral Problems & School Discipline
- Grades & Academic Support
- State Assessments & Testing
- Graduation Program
- Personal Graduation Plan (PGP)
- Extracurricular Activities
- Different Placements May Require Different Educational Advocacy
- Nutrition

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR DAY-TO-DAY EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

In a perfect world no child would need an education advocate, but children in foster care often need a strong and reliable adult presence when their parents are unable to fill that role. There are many areas in which a parent is typically involved in their child's life at school, including discipline, attendance, grades, assessments, extracurricular activities and tutoring. Foster children need even more diligent attention in these areas.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all Texas children ages 6-18.³⁸ To receive credit for class, a student must attend school for at least 90% of the days the class is offered.³⁹ Students with excessive absences may restore credit as provided by each school district (LEA)'s local policy. However, procedures must be in place to provide proportionate credit and credit by exam for students in foster care.⁴⁰



Coordinate with the child's caregiver about transportation and communicate with the school about the child's appointments.



Under the **Education Code**, absences required under the service plan or related to court-ordered activities, such as medical appointments, including mental health or therapy, family visitation, and college visits, are excused.⁴¹ The campus principal has discretion to excuse other absences. For more information, visit the TEA Student Attendance Accounting Handbook at <https://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=25769817607>.

Behavioral Problems & School Discipline

School suspensions and expulsions contribute to education gaps and learning delays, and also put students at serious risk of dropping out of school. In order to keep youth engaged in school and on track for graduation, schools are encouraged to use trauma-informed approaches with Response to Intervention (RTI), Restorative Discipline, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies to prevent behavioral issues whenever possible.

In light of the physical abuse or other trauma children in foster care may have endured, DFPS, acting in its role as a child's parent or conservator, has a policy prohibiting the use of corporal or physical punishment as a disciplinary method. If your CASA child is attending a school that allows corporal punishment, the child's caregiver or EDM must submit to the



If the school district allows corporal punishment, one of your first steps as a child's educational advocate is to check that a written opt-out form has been filed with the school for the current school year.

school a signed statement **every year** that prohibits the use of corporal punishment on the child.⁴²

CASA volunteers may work with school personnel to help them better understand and make connections between a student's learning needs and behaviors in the school setting and circumstances out of the school setting. Sensitivity to and awareness of the challenges students may be facing can help school personnel respond in a way that is sensitive and adaptive to students' needs.

Grades & Academic Support

It is also important to ensure that students are placed in the correct class level at the time of enrollment and throughout the school year. For example, at the high school level, students can take basic, pre-AP, AP and dual credit courses, all of which offer a different level of rigor and challenge.

Students will confer with school counselors to identify and plan the appropriate courses for high school graduation. Make sure that your CASA child is in a class that is academically challenging but presented at a level that allows them to succeed.

Pursuing tutors and special supports to ensure that your CASA child successfully manages their academic course load is essential. Every district is unique, so get to know the available services in your area. A great resource is your local school district website. You may be able to contact student support specialists, Communities In Schools staff, counselors and others who work with at-risk students.

Depending on the school district, an individual with access to a child's school records can also access the online portal for parents and guardians to monitor grades, absences and disciplinary actions on a daily basis.⁴³ If you have access, you could use the portal to set alerts if a grade falls below a certain level or if your CASA child is absent from a class. This is a very valuable tool for monitoring student performance and typically also allows you to communicate directly via email with teachers.



Monitor report cards closely to ensure that your CASA child is making satisfactory grades. If your CASA child is struggling in a particular class, you can always encourage the EDM to set up a meeting with the student and teacher to discuss the issues and ways you and others can provide support.





Many foster youth will need support in areas in addition to academic tutoring. For example, some students have poor time management and study skills, and may need help preparing for college entrance exams such as the ACT and SAT, writing college essays and completing applications for colleges, universities or trade schools. There are numerous sources of support for these activities, both online and through schools and nonprofit organizations. Below are a couple examples of online support services:

- **How-to-Study.com:** Offers many suggestions and techniques for taking notes, developing good listening skills, test taking strategies and more. This is an excellent source for volunteers to get ideas for activities to explore with youth. (www.how-to-study.com)
- **Online Tutorial Resources:** Free online tutorials in a huge variety of academic subjects, including vocational and technology skills, high school and college courses and financial literacy. (<http://www.khake.com/page67.html>)

State Assessments & Testing

Students in Texas public schools take the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests in grades 3-8, and end-of-course exams in designated courses in high school. If they fail a test, they are provided accelerated instruction and an opportunity to retake the exam. Students in grades 5 and 8 must pass the reading and math tests in order to be promoted to the next grade. High school students must pass end-of-course exams in five subjects in order to graduate. Schools typically focus a great deal on test preparation in the months preceding the STAAR test, so it's important to avoid moving a student before and during the testing periods each year.

- For more information on the testing schedule, visit <http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/calendars>. To learn more about the five end-of-course assessments and their relationship to graduation, visit <https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/staar/>.



Steps to Take to Support a Student's Testing

- Find out if the school is offering additional supports to the student in preparation of the test.
- Encourage the student's presence during mandated testing periods.
- Remind the student and caretaker about the importance of proper nutrition and rest in preparation for exam days.
- Monitor the student's assessment results and learning needs.
- Work with the caseworker, caretaker and school staff to connect to academic interventions to support learning.
- Advocate for the student to participate in make-up exams when appropriate.
- Communicate with both the sending and receiving schools when a child must move before or during an assessment. Make sure a plan and opportunity for the student to take the assessment is in place.

- Compensatory education is defined as programs and/or services designed to supplement the regular education program for students identified as at risk of dropping out of school.⁴⁴ Students in foster care fall within this category. The school district may use state compensatory education funds to provide supplemental instructional services to accelerate learning and academic performance for children in foster care. These services may help to eliminate any disparity in performance on the STAAR or disparity in the rates of high school completion.

Graduation Program⁴⁵

If your CASA child is in or entering high school, you will also want to monitor your child's progress toward graduation. Be sure that the child is enrolled in courses that will lead to graduation under an appropriate graduation program.

Students hoping to attend higher education need to be enrolled in courses that will lead to the Distinguished Level of Achievement (DLA), meaning that the student will complete the Foundation Program with an endorsement and complete required coursework, including Algebra II. Students who graduate without the DLA, even with an endorsement, may not be prepared to attend a four-year institution of higher education in Texas. Students may graduate on the Foundation Program without the DLA or an endorsement but only with the consent of a parent or guardian.

The Education Code sets out assessments and graduation requirements. Under that law, schools must also formulate a plan to increase the number of graduating seniors who enroll in higher education for the year following graduation.⁴⁶

Personal Graduation Plan (PGP)

To graduate, all students in high school and some students in middle school must have a **Personal Graduation Plan (PGP)**.⁴⁷ The PGP is a written plan that identifies the student's educational goals and methods to promote the student's advancement. The student's course schedule, including endorsements, electives and long-term goal setting and planning, are included. A student's PGP must also be signed off by their parent or guardian. The PGP requirements provide a critical opportunity to begin discussion with your CASA child about their interests, goals, future plans and coursework. All of those involved can engage with the school and student in a coordinated manner regarding the student's goals, interests, academic progress and future plans.⁴⁸ A PGP is also required for all middle school students who do not pass satisfactorily on a state assessment or are not likely to receive a high school diploma before the fifth school year following their enrollment in ninth grade, as determined by the district.⁴⁹



The Personal Graduation Plan is an excellent written plan that can serve as a foundation for communicating with your older CASA child about graduation and their future. For more information about graduation and endorsements, see the TEA Graduation Toolkit at <http://tea.texas.gov/communications/brochures.aspx>

- Students must meet with counselors prior to entering ninth grade to begin developing a PGP. New incoming students must meet with school counselors to develop or revisit their PGP. Students can meet with counselors and change or update their PGP throughout the year.
- Although a Graduation Equivalency Degree (GED) may be a substitute for a diploma, it is only appropriate in limited circumstances. DFPS requires approval before a GED can be included in the service plan.

Extracurricular Activities

Children that participate in sports, clubs, student government, the arts and other extracurricular activities have better grades and higher attendance, and are more likely to complete requirements for high school graduation. However, children in foster care are less likely to participate in these activities due to a number of factors such as transportation needs, fees for the activities and not being aware of the activities.

This is an excellent area in which to advocate for your CASA child.

Learn what interests them, what is available in the school district, such as Communities In Schools or 21st Century, and make the necessary connections to ensure that they are actively engaged in one or more meaningful activities. Advocate for participation in extracurricular activities outside school hours to maximize the student's engagement in school.

Different Placements May Require Different Educational Advocacy

How you get involved in educational advocacy for your CASA child will be different depending on the type of placement where the child lives. For example, if the child resides with a relative, the caregiver may need additional help to navigate enrollment and other school processes. If the child is in a foster home licensed by a Child Placing Agency (CPA), you may need to work with the CPA staff to find an appropriate placement within the school's attendance area.

If your CASA child is in a **Residential Treatment Center (RTC)**, it will be even more critical for you to be informed about your child's educational needs. An RTC is a general residential operation for 13 or more children or young adults that exclusively provides treatment services for children with emotional disorders.

- The RTC should have plans for meeting the educational needs of each child, including the RTC's educational program and required participation by students.
- For more information, browse Texas CASA's RTC Manual at <http://texascasa.org/learning-center/resources/residential-treatment-center-manual/>.

Stay up to date with the child's living arrangements and consider how any changes could affect their needs in school.



The Office of the Texas Attorney General found that no durational residential requirement in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules could be applied to a child placed by DFPS or a court into a foster home located in a receiving school district.⁵⁰ This is true regardless of whether this is the student's first time to be placed in a foster home or the child has been moved to a new foster home: if the placement is by DFPS or a court, no durational requirement can be imposed if the reason for the student's relocation is placement in care.⁵¹



Ask whether the child was automatically enrolled in an RTC-associated charter school when a mainstream public school opportunity was available. Is the child learning in the least restrictive environment? Can the charter school provide the educational and ancillary services required to meet the student's educational needs and goals?

Nutrition

Children and youth in foster care are categorically eligible for free meals under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. These programs also include summer feeding programs in the local communities. Caregivers for children and youth in foster care do not have to complete a separate application for these programs. DFPS Form 2085 contains the authorization for immediate enrollment in this program. If students exit foster care within the school year, they will remain eligible for nutrition assistance through the end of that school year.⁵² Please make sure the district foster care liaison is aware of your CASA child's enrollment – free meals will be coordinated by the liaison.

Final Thoughts

Talk to your CASA child and find out which subjects interest them the most. Also discuss ways to help your CASA child become more engaged in classes that interest them less. If your CASA child is not involved in extracurricular activities, discuss why with the child's caregiver, school counselor and EDM.

Don't forget that the DFPS regional education specialists are there to help navigate the school setting and achieve better educational outcomes for students in care.





CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Who Makes Special Education-Related Decisions?
- Rights & Responsibilities of the Surrogate Parent
- The Special Education Process – Referral & Consent
- Evaluations
- Special Education Eligibility
- School Transfers for Special Education Students
- Special Disciplinary Considerations
- Graduation

CHAPTER SIX

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION & SECTION 504 SERVICES

School districts are required to offer services to qualifying students with disabilities in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or with Section (§) 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As a CASA volunteer, you may be asked to participate in making decisions about your CASA child’s need for special education instruction and services under IDEA or for accommodations and modifications through §504. CASA volunteers who have been appointed as surrogate parents for students receiving special education services will have additional responsibilities.

If you are appointed as a surrogate parent for your CASA child, and they are eligible for special education services, you are required to learn about rights afforded to special education students and their parents. You will also need to become familiar with the specific educational needs of the child.⁵³




Key Terms Regarding Special Education & Section 504

If you are an advocate of a student receiving special education services, the following terms and definitions may be helpful to better understand the special education process.

Special Education Under IDEA:	Specifically designed instruction at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. There must be a continuum of supports and services, including accommodations and modifications, to ensure the student with a disability has access to the general curriculum. To qualify for special education services, a student must be evaluated and determined to have a disability and an educational need.
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):	Requirement that a student who has a disability be educated in the least restrictive environment and, to the maximum extent appropriate, with their peers who do not have disabilities.
Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):	All students receiving special education services are afforded the right to a FAPE – a federal right for students with disabilities to receive special education services at no cost.
Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee:	A meeting held among school staff, a student’s parent or surrogate parent and those persons designated by IDEA that are invited to participate in making decisions related to the student’s eligibility for special education services under IDEA. The ARD committee, including the parent or surrogate parent, determines whether the student qualifies for special education and related services and develops the student’s individualized educational program. If the student qualifies for special education services, the ARD committee develops, reviews and revises the student’s IEP, and determines the student’s educational placement. The committee meets at least once a year to review the student’s progress and placement. An ARD committee meeting may also be requested by the parent or surrogate parent or the school (including a teacher) to discuss issues at other times.

Individualized Education Program (IEP):	A plan that is developed by the ARD committee that details special education and related services provided to the student through IDEA funding. The plan for a student with a disability who qualifies for §504 accommodations will not be as detailed as an IEP.
Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA):	A behavioral assessment that uses current data related to target behaviors and addresses behavioral concerns across home, school and community-based settings. The FBA serves as an important tool in determining the student’s behavioral needs and interventions.
Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):	The BIP is developed from an FBA and is part of the student’s IEP. It identifies supports and services that will be provided to encourage positive behaviors and manage inappropriate behaviors. A BIP should only be implemented after the school conducts an FBA to determine what function the targeted negative behaviors are serving. The ARD committee reviews the BIP as needed and may modify it during a disciplinary ARD committee meeting.




If your CASA child has a disability and you need more information, ask school personnel about how the child will be evaluated and which programs and services the child might be eligible for.

Who Makes Special Education-Related Decisions?

For a child to be provided with special education services, a “parent” must sign consent for evaluation and consent for the child to receive services. If your CASA child receives special education services, they must be appointed a surrogate parent if no other person is serving in the capacity of a parent.⁵⁵ A surrogate parent is a qualified person appointed by a school district or court to act on a child’s behalf in the absence of a biological or foster parent for purposes of special education decision making. This person makes decisions related to identification, evaluation and placement of the child as well as the provision of FAPE for the child.⁵⁶

The surrogate parent may or may not be the same person who is designated by DFPS as the student’s education decision maker. The surrogate parent is only authorized to make decisions regarding special education, and is appointed by the school or, more rarely, the court.⁵⁷ See Chapter 3 for more details.



Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (§504) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities.⁵⁴ It ensures that the student with a disability has equal access to an education. Unlike special education services under IDEA, §504 plans provide education accommodations that “level the playing field” without changing what the student is expected to master. Some disabilities, such as dyslexia, require special services or accommodation but may not meet the IDEA disability criteria of a “learning disability,” and in those cases the services may be provided under §504 and state law. Students with disabilities related to attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may also be provided with services under §504, although these students may, under certain circumstances, qualify for IDEA special education services under other health impaired (OHI). Unlike IDEA special education services, §504 does not require the school to provide the student with an IEP. For additional information about §504, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.

For a child living in a foster home, the foster parent will serve as the child’s “parent” for special education purposes unless the foster parent is unable or unwilling.⁵⁸ CPS, school district and residential facility employees cannot be named as a surrogate parent of a child.⁵⁹ For a child living in a residential care facility who does not have a foster parent, a CASA volunteer may be the best person to act as the surrogate parent.



It is important for CASA volunteers to work closely with the surrogate parent if they are not acting in that role because the surrogate parent is responsible for special education-related decisions.

The school has 30 days to appoint a surrogate parent after realizing the need.⁶¹ Training must be completed by the appointee within 90 days after being appointed as surrogate parent.⁶²

Disability Rights Texas, DFPS regional education specialists and school districts offer a certification process for advocates who would like to become surrogate parents for their CASA children. A webinar training provided by Disability Rights Texas can be found on Texas CASA’s website at <https://texascasa.org/learning-center/resources/surrogate-parent-training/>.

Rights & Responsibilities of the Surrogate Parent

If you are appointed as a surrogate parent for a child who is receiving special education services under IDEA, you will be a member of the ARD committee. The ARD committee determines the child’s eligibility for special education services, reviews assessment information, determines the child’s placement and designs the child’s IEP.

If your CASA child has a disability and is receiving special education services under IDEA, the child will have an IEP that indicates: their placement, including the instructional settings (general education classroom or special education classroom); who will provide the specially designed instruction or related services; annual goals and objectives of the child’s IEP; participation in extracurricular activities; and for students who are over 14 years of age, a transition plan. The ARD committee may also develop a BIP if it is determined that the student requires one. **As the surrogate parent, you have the right and the responsibility to speak up in these meetings to make sure the child’s IEP and any behavior plans meet the child’s needs.**



The law requires a surrogate parent to:

- Complete a training program that complies with minimum standards established by agency rule.
- Visit the child and the child’s school.
- Consult with persons involved in the child’s education, including teachers, caseworkers, court-appointed volunteers, guardians and attorneys ad litem, foster parents and caretakers.
- Review the child’s educational records.
- Attend meetings of the child’s ARD committee.
- Exercise independent judgment in pursuing the child’s interests.
- Exercise the child’s due process rights under applicable state and federal laws.⁶⁰

When a surrogate parent has concerns about a child's special education services, they should discuss them with the school. The surrogate parent has the right to request a meeting of the ARD committee at any time to review concerns regarding development or implementation of the child's IEP, including the BIP.

If the surrogate parent believes the school has violated a child's special education rights or disagrees with the school about a child's special education placement, services, evaluations, classification or eligibility for special education, an impartial hearing may be requested. The surrogate parent also has the right to request a meeting of the ARD committee at any time in order to review the child's academic or BIP needs.



An ARD committee is not convened and an IEP is not developed for students with disabilities who are being served through §504. If your CASA child is receiving §504 services, including instruction for dyslexia, contact the school to learn more about the services provided and procedures for review of progress and educational planning.



Things Surrogate Parents Should Know & Do

- Make every effort to attend every ARD committee meeting concerning your CASA child.
- Make sure you can describe the child's disability and its impact on school performance.
- Discuss what programs or services you believe the child needs, and be prepared to explain why those services are the right fit.
- Ask any service providers, teachers or anyone else who knows the child and has relevant information to participate in the ARD meeting.
- Review all of your CASA child's evaluations, observations and progress reports. If you do not have an evaluation, request a copy in advance of the ARD meeting.
- Think about whether the completed evaluations support the services you are requesting. If the evaluations do not accurately identify the child's needs, strategize with school staff to locate appropriate services and supports.
- If the child has received special education services in the past, try to determine how much progress the child has made since the last IEP meeting or the last evaluation. Have they met the goals on the previous year's IEP? If not, the student may need additional supports, services or possibly a different setting. Or, in the instance of multiple moves since the last IEP or evaluation, suggest strategies to help the child make progress.
- You have the right to an interpreter at the ARD meeting. If you would like one, contact the child's school at least three business days before the meeting.

The Special Education Process – Referral & Consent

It is important for you to know your CASA child’s strengths and needs so you can advocate for an appropriate special education program, including academic rigor and effective behavior intervention strategies. Collaboration with school staff is key to solving problems and making sure your CASA child receives services that are necessary to be successful.

- Either the surrogate parent or school staff can request in writing to the special education director of the school district that a student be evaluated to determine eligibility for special education services.
- The school has **15 school days** to obtain written parental consent for the evaluation or to respond to the written request if the school refuses to evaluate the student.⁶³ The initial evaluation must be completed no later than **45 school days** following the date that the LEA receives signed parental consent for the evaluation, assuming that the student is absent for fewer than three school days during that 45-school-day period.⁶⁴
- The surrogate parent must consent to the evaluation. However, if a surrogate parent has not been appointed yet, the parent or DFPS may provide consent in the meantime.
- Consent to evaluate is usually obtained when the surrogate parent meets with the school psychologist or education diagnostician, receives notice of the evaluation, gives a social history and receives an explanation of procedural safeguards.
- To withdraw consent for assessment or services, the surrogate parent must consult with the child’s caseworker prior to withdrawing consent. Upon receipt of written revocation of consent, the school must honor that decision. Before the school discontinues services, it must provide the surrogate parent with prior written notice that services will cease.⁶⁵ However, if the school can prove that the child needs an evaluation and the child’s education decision maker or surrogate parent will not consent, the school may file for an impartial hearing to gain consent to evaluate.
- Additionally, if the surrogate parent refuses consent for **reevaluation** of the child, the school may, but is not required to, ask for mediation or request a due process hearing to override the lack of consent for reevaluation.



We know this is a complicated topic. Please reach out to your CASA supervisor for direction when needed. For more information about relevant special education evaluation timelines, visit https://www.disabilityrightstx.org/files/Education_Resource_New_Timeline_for_Special_Ed_Process_Aug_2013.pdf.

Evaluations

IDEA or special education services are provided when a student is evaluated and determined to have a disability that indicates the need for specially designed instruction and related services in order to benefit from an education. §504 services typically are provided when the student needs accommodations to “level the playing field” and benefit from an education.

- School districts and charter schools typically follow similar notice and consent procedures when evaluating students for special education eligibility under IDEA or for evaluating students for §504 accommodations. When a student is suspected of having a disability, the student’s parent or guardian (or foster or surrogate parent if the child is in foster care) receives notice of the procedures and gives consent for the evaluation.

- Once the school district receives consent to evaluate, the school district will perform the initial full individual evaluation (FIE) at no cost to the family or surrogate parent then convene an ARD meeting to discuss the evaluation and determine eligibility.
- If the surrogate parent disagrees with the evaluation outcomes, they have the option to either pay for a private outside evaluation or ask the school to pay for an outside independent education evaluation (IEE). The district must file for an impartial hearing to prove that another evaluation is not necessary or pay for the IEE. While the ARD committee must consider all private evaluations, it is not legally bound to follow the recommendations of a private evaluation.
- A school may start the special education evaluation process without parental consent if the school's attempts to contact the parent have failed, parental rights have been terminated or a judge has suspended a parent's rights. As an advocate you should make sure the school district or the judge has appointed someone that can make education decisions, because the school cannot initiate special education services without the signed written consent of a "parent," including a foster or surrogate parent.

Special Education Eligibility

For special education purposes, the term "disabilities" may include autism, deaf-blindness, auditory impairment, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, learning disability, speech impairment, visual impairment or non-categorical (early childhood).⁶⁶

- A district must provide special education services to students between the ages of 0-21 that have visual or auditory impairments and to all eligible students between the ages of 3-21 with an IDEA-identified disability such as a physical disability, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, learning disability, autism, speech disability or traumatic brain injury.⁶⁷
- For the federal definition⁶⁸ of the term "disability" and other helpful information, visit http://framework.esc18.net/Documents/Side_by_Side.pdf.
- If the student is considered eligible for special education services, the ARD committee will develop an IEP for the student. The IEP generally includes, but is not limited to, the following components⁶⁹:
 - Present levels of academic and functional performance (PLAAFP)
 - Measurable annual goals
 - In some circumstances, short-term objectives or benchmarks
 - The extent to which the student may participate in general education classes
 - The extent to which the student may participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities
 - A BIP, if required
 - Information regarding participation in state testing, including testing accommodations
 - Graduation criteria and a transition plan to prepare the student for life after high school (for students 14 and older)
- An ARD meeting may be convened at any time to address the student's educational needs, but a meeting must be convened at least annually to review the student's IEP.



Under the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), once a student is determined eligible for special education services, the district may stop providing special education services for eligible students only under the following conditions⁷⁰:

- The student turns 22 years old before Sept. 1 of the current school year.
- The student meets the requirements for graduation and receives a high school diploma.

- For more information on special education and related services, visit https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Special_Student_Populations/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/Programs_and_Services/.

School Transfers for Special Education Students

When a special education student transfers schools in the middle of a special education evaluation, both the sending and receiving schools have a duty to ensure that the evaluation is promptly completed.⁷¹

- If a special education student transfers into a new school district prior to the completion of a special education evaluation, the sending school district should forward the evaluation referral to the new school district. Texas law requires the receiving school to accept the evaluation referral made by the sending school.⁷²
- If a student in special education that attends a Texas school district moves after an IEP has been established, the receiving district must provide appropriate special education services, including services comparable to those described in the previous IEP, until the new district can call an ARD committee meeting to review the IEP. The receiving district may choose to perform a new evaluation before establishing an IEP, but the district must provide comparable services during the interim 30-day period.⁷³
- For more information, see the Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book at <http://benchbook.texaschildrenscommission.gov/>.

Special Disciplinary Considerations



Under **IDEA**, students with disabilities are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education.⁷⁴ Students thus have a legal right to make progress toward their IEP goals despite any change in school placement as a result of any disciplinary action.⁷⁵ When a student with a disability is removed for more than 10 days, the ARD committee must conduct a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR).⁷⁶ An MDR is also required for a pattern of removals that amounts to more than a 10-day change in placement.⁷⁷

The purpose of the Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) is to determine whether the conduct in question was a manifestation of the child's disability and whether it was a direct result of a failure to implement the child's IEP. If the answer to either of those determinations is "yes," the school may not change the student's placement. The school must, instead, conduct an FBA to assess the student's behavioral needs, develop a BIP to develop positive interventions and supports for the student, and then return the student to the appropriate placement. For more information regarding disciplinary considerations, visit:

- <http://drtx-org.securec24.ezhostingserver.com/Guides/>
- <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/discipl.mdr.strategy.htm>

Graduation

A special education student may graduate from high school by completing the minimum credit requirements for students in general education, completing the minimum curriculum requirements to the extent possible as determined by the ARD committee or completing the requirements of the IEP including one of the following conditions outlined in the IEP:

- Full-time employment and sufficient self-help skills to maintain employment without direct and ongoing support from the school district
- Demonstration of specific employability and self-help skills that do not require direct ongoing support from the school district
- Access to services that are not within the legal responsibility of public education
- Access to employment or educational options for which the student has been prepared by the academic program



Check with the school counselor, the EDM, the surrogate parent and/or the DFPS caseworker about whether the student is on track for graduation.

Final Thoughts

Your role as an advocate and/or surrogate parent of a special education student is an important one. Below are tips to help ensure success for the student, as well as smooth interactions throughout the special education process.

- Interact with the school staff when things are going well as often as you do when things are going poorly.
- Be persistent if there is no action taken when issues arise. If someone says that nothing can be done to assist the child, seek a second opinion. Remind school personnel that the child is entitled to a FAPE and that there needs to be a strategy to address the child's needs even when resources are limited.
- Approach school personnel assuming that they are also interested in what is best for the child. Collaboration and working closely with team members is often the best way to get a good outcome for your CASA child.
- If you are appointed as surrogate parent, read the committee's decisions before you sign your name. Unless you mark the checkbox indicating that you agree with the ARD committee's determinations, signing the attendance sheet does not mean that you agree with the IEP or with everything that was said during the meeting – it simply means that you were present at the meeting.
- If you do not agree with the ARD committee's decisions, and have the authority to sign, sign your name and write that you do not agree. Get a draft of the IEP before you leave the ARD meeting, and be sure you receive a final copy soon after. Check the IEP to make sure it accurately reflects what was discussed at the meeting.
- Members who disagree with the ARD committee's decisions shall be offered the opportunity to write their own statements.



For more information about the procedural safeguards and the appeal process, visit https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Government_Relations_and_Legal/Special_Education/Due_Process_Hearings/Office_of_Legal_Services_Special_Education_Due_Process_Hearing_Program/.



CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) (0-36 months)
- Early Head Start (EHS) (Ages 0-3) & Head Start (HS) (Ages 3-5)
- Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Programs in Local School Districts

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR SCHOOL READINESS

Children are school ready when they possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and later learning and life.⁷⁸ Children in foster care have experienced neglect or abuse and may not have had the opportunities or advantages of other children. They may be developmentally delayed in one or more domains, ranging from academic to social or emotional. The following interventions and supports can help children in foster care with any developmental delays and allow them to participate in school at the same level as other students.

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) (0-36 months)

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services are designed to serve families with children from birth to 36 months with developmental delays or disabilities. ECI provides family support and specialized services to strengthen the family's ability to access resources and improve their child's development through daily activities. ECI contracts with community organizations to provide the required intervention services and ensures that services are available to all eligible children and their families.

CPS has a process for ensuring children under the age of 3 are referred to ECI for an initial screening or ECI outreach if the child meets one or more of the following criteria:

- has a disability,
- has a developmental delay, or
- shows signs of being affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure.⁷⁹

Services may include family education and support; audiology and vision services; nursing and nutrition services; physical, occupational and speech-language therapies; and developmental services.



Early Head Start (EHS) (Ages 0-3) & Head Start (HS) (Ages 3-5)

Provided children meet age requirements, children in foster care are categorically eligible for both Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS), regardless of family income.⁸⁰

Federally funded, the EHS program is for low-income infants, toddlers, pregnant women and their families. EHS programs enhance children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development; assist pregnant women with accessing comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; support parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and help parents move toward self-sufficiency. EHS programs are available to the family until the child turns 3 years old and is ready to transition into Head Start or another pre-K program.

Benefits of a Head Start classroom for your CASA child:

- Classroom ratio: one teacher and one teaching assistant per 20 students
- Additional developmental screenings and ongoing assessments

- Additional parental engagement opportunities
- School supplies provided for every child
- Family Advocate services
- Wrap-around services that include health and dental services

In addition to education services, HS programs provide children ages 3-5 and their families with health, nutrition, social and other services.

EHS services are provided for at least 6 hours per day. HS preschool services may be half-day (4 hours) or full-day. Foster parents or caregivers of a child in conservatorship do not have to share personal or family financial information with Head Start in order to be determined eligible. If Early Head Start or Head Start programs are not available in the local community or not appropriate for the child, the caregiver notifies the caseworker who documents the information in the case file.

Tips on Applying for Head Start

- The process for applying for Head Start may be completed through email. For more information, visit <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/how-apply>.
- There may not be available slots in your community, but you can advocate by making sure your CASA child is on the waiting list for the program.
- For more information visit Head Start-An Office of the Administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>.

Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Programs in Local School Districts⁸¹

Pre-K is a program that is operated by an LEA or open enrollment charter school using funding from TEA. According to the Texas Education Code, children currently in foster care or who have ever been in foster care as a result of an adversary hearing are eligible for enrollment in the local public school pre-K program.⁸² An LEA must offer free pre-K classes if they identify 15 or more eligible children who are at least 4 years of age by Sept. 1 of the current school year. They may offer pre-K classes if they identify 15 or more eligible children who are at least 3 years of age.



- Once a public school free pre-K program for 4-year-olds is established, eligible children cannot be placed on a waitlist. In smaller districts where Head Start is the sole pre-K provider, children may be placed on a waitlist.
- Children who turn age 5 after Sept. 1 of the school year are not eligible for kindergarten enrollment but are eligible for pre-K enrollment.
- Pre-K classes are typically half-day programs, but some districts may use federal, state or other local community resources to implement a full-day program.

- CPS caseworkers work with their regional education specialist to obtain letters of verification for pre-K enrollment. The letter of verification serves as proof of eligibility for free pre-K programs offered through local public schools. For more information on DFPS policy regarding school readiness, visit <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Menu/MenuCPSa15000.asp>.
- Children ages 3-5 with development delays or disabilities may qualify for the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) offered through Texas public schools. Contact the Special Education Director at your local public school for enrollment procedures.

Final Thoughts

As a CASA volunteer, if any of the children on your case are too young for school, understanding the opportunities listed in this chapter are critical. Making sure that the youngest of the kids we serve have these early advantages can make a profound difference in their further education.

Each child ages 3, 4 and 5 in the conservatorship of DFPS must be enrolled in an appropriate public preschool or pre-K program unless DFPS has granted an exception. If your CASA child is of preschool age and is not enrolled in a program, talk to the caregiver and the caseworker about your concerns.





CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Transition Out of Care
- Education & Training Voucher (ETV) Program
- Tuition Fee Waiver
- Critical Timelines

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES⁸³

College readiness is defined as “the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program.”⁸⁴ To be college ready, students need a variety of skills, abilities and attitudes across a wide range of emotional and cognitive domains.

Children who engage in postsecondary opportunities like college or vocational training have increased knowledge and skills, greater potential, more job opportunities and the ability to earn more money.⁸⁵ Due to trauma, school mobility, financial challenges and other challenges, former foster students who pursue postsecondary opportunities often need additional support. As a CASA volunteer working closely with young people, you can play an important role in guiding students towards postsecondary success.

Transition Out of Care

Becoming an adult may be difficult for many children who have entered foster care during various stages of their childhood. It is essential these students receive services and support to help them transition to independent adulthood. For example, former foster youth need to learn how to balance a budget, find housing, pay rent on time and obtain insurance and identification. There is a wide range of services offered to help support youth as they transition to adulthood. For more information on these services, visit http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/default.asp.

Education & Training Voucher (ETV) Program

DFPS receives federal funding to provide postsecondary education and training vouchers to former foster youth from age 16 through their 23rd birthday. The ETV program can pay for housing, food, tuition/fees (for schools that do not accept the tuition waiver discussed below), books, tutoring, etc. For more information, visit https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education.

Tuition Fee Waiver

Under certain circumstances, students who were in foster care until high school graduation or age 18, or were adopted out of the foster care system after the age of 14, or PMC was granted to a non-parent, or were returned to parents, are eligible for a free lifetime tuition and fees waiver for any state college in Texas.⁸⁶ The tuition and fee waiver eligibility is verified by a letter from DFPS.



School personnel and advocates can assist students in meeting the tuition waiver requirement by facilitating enrollment in at least one dual-credit or college course during their junior or senior year in high school.

To access the tuition waiver, the student must take at least one dual credit or college course prior to turning 25. As a CASA volunteer, you can use this as an opportunity to connect your CASA child with coursework that is interesting to them and aligns with their long-term goals. For more information, visit https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education/college_tuition_waiver.asp. Also, see Appendix C for a more detailed explanation of the postsecondary programs for foster youth.⁸⁷

Critical Timelines



Ages 13-14:

If the child is in foster care during their birthday at these ages, the child can apply for the Free Application For Student Aid (FAFSA) as an independent student whether the child is adopted or goes back to the biological parent. At age 14, the child will qualify for a free tuition and fees waiver at any state university.

Ages 14-15:

Introduce the child to higher education opportunities through campus tours and other activities. Start with local colleges and universities, and then identify other possible trips based on the youth's interests.

Age 16:

The child is eligible for Tuition and Fee Waiver Exemption for high school dual credit courses. For more information, visit <http://texasfosteryouth.org/legal-resources/legal-resources-for-youth/education/>.

Ages 16-23:

The child is eligible for the Education and Training Voucher (ETV). For more information, visit https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education/default.asp.

Age 18:

Review educational needs and identify necessary requirements for high school graduation (including credit recovery). A high school counselor can help with this. For more information, visit <http://www.tiva.org>.

The child or caregiver should receive the DFPS education portfolio before exiting conservatorship. For more information, visit https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x15000.asp#CPS_15423.

Final Thoughts

Promote the vision with college visits. Research has proven that youth who are exposed to college life via college visits, summer camps and other activities on college campuses are more likely to attend college than students who have never visited a campus. If there are universities in your community or within a reasonable distance, create your own field trip and spend a day touring the campus. Most colleges and universities offer guided tours for youth in 11th and 12th grade, and often for younger students. This allows the youth to envision themselves in the college environment and helps them develop goals and aspirations for college success. Start this as early as possible in your CASA child's life. Coordinate with DFPS Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff to arrange college tours for students.

Help prepare your CASA child for college entrance exams. Because young people in foster care placement are so often behind academically, it's important to support them in preparing for the ACT and SAT exams. Work with DFPS to find online programs that offer practice tests, test prep and tutoring. Essay writing is a key part of both exams, so helping them practice writing clear and compelling paragraphs is very important. Check out <https://www.number2.com/> for example – this website offers free practice tests.

Help them search for scholarships online. There are a number of free scholarship search engines available:

- FastWeb is the largest, most up-to-date and most-used scholarship search site. Students can sign up to receive automatic email notifications of new scholarships that match their profiles. Go to www.fastweb.com.
- College Board Scholarship Search lists scholarships and other types of financial aid programs from more than 3,000 national, state and other public and private sources. Go to <https://www.collegeboard.org/?student>. Enter scholarship search in the search box.
- Student Scholarship Search is another scholarship database. Find it at <http://www.studentscholarshipsearch.com/>.
- For other scholarship search options, review FinAid's list of free search sites at <http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/other.phtml>.

Find out if your CASA child's school offers support programs. Programs such as Upward Bound, GEAR UP and AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) are all free programs aimed at preparing students for college and individual success, and are increasingly offered within LEAs. To find out where AVID is offered, go to <http://www.avid.org>. There are also liaisons and campus supports at many Texas colleges and universities. Visit <http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/apps/financialaid/tofa2.cfm?ID=429> and <http://www.educationreachfortexans.org/> for more information.



CONCLUSION

As a CASA volunteer, you're already familiar with the many challenges children in foster care face, including when it comes to reaching their full academic potential. Issues like frequent school changes, lack of cross-system communication, the effects of traumatic experiences and more can often hold these children back from attaining a quality education and meeting their goals.

But now, armed with the tools and knowledge in this guidebook, you are also aware of the instrumental **opportunity** you have to make a real difference for your CASA child's education. Equipped with a better understanding of how the school and child welfare systems interact, you can stand up for your student and ensure they get the individualized attention they deserve – setting them up to succeed and overcome their circumstances.

Texas CASA's vision is a safe, positive future for all Texas children, and this work is an essential part of achieving that vision. Volunteers like you have the potential to make a lasting difference in a child's life. You have the power to help a child reach their educational goals by making sure they have the resources and support they need. Thank you for all that you do to create brighter futures for the children who need us most.



RESOURCES

Educational Advocacy

- Texas CASA: <http://texascasa.org/learning-center/resources/topics/educational-advocacy/>
- Children’s Commission. (2012). The Texas Blueprint: Transforming education outcomes for children & youth in foster care. The final report of the education committee: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/foster-care-education/foster-education-committee.aspx>
- Education Issues for Students in Foster Care. Texas Association of School Boards Legal Services, 2014: http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/1198/education_issues_for_students_in_foster_care.pdf
- Child Welfare Information Gateway: Meeting Educational Needs of Children & Youth in Out-of-Home Care: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/service-array/education-services/meeting-needs/>
- Legal Center for Foster Care & Education: <http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/>
- TEA Foster Care & Student Success: <http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>
- Texas Foster Youth Justice Project: <http://www.texasfosteryouth.org/>

Special Education

- Disability Rights Texas: <https://www.disabilityrightstx.org/>
- The Arc and Disability Rights Texas IDEA Manual: <https://www.thearcoftexas.org/idea-manual/>
- Wrightslaw: <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>
- U.S. Department of Education IDEA website: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- Texas Project FIRST (Education Service Center 9): <http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/>
- Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk Building RTI Capacity Project: https://buildingrti.utexas.org/rti-search/special_population/students-foster-care

Postsecondary Education

- Casey Family Programs: Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care: <https://www.casey.org/supporting-success/>
- Scholarship Search Engine: Lists several scholarships available for young people who are or who have been in the foster care system: <http://collegescholarships.org>
- DFPS Postsecondary Resources: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Post_Secondary_Education/default.asp
- Education Resources for Youth in Foster Care: Provided by the National Resource Center for Permanency & Family Connections, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College: http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering_connections/education.html
- Education Reach for Texans: Works across the state to build support networks for foster care alumni who attend public colleges and universities: <http://www.educationreachfortexans.org/>
- Foster Care to Success: “America’s College Fund for Foster Youth”: <http://www.fc2success.org/>
- Texas Higher Education Information & Resource Guide for Foster Care Liaisons: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/2075/he-liaisons-guide-final-updated-76.pdf>

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

Laws, Rules, Etc.

CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act
FERPA	Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Agencies & Departments

ACF	Administration for Children & Families
CPS	Child Protective Services
DARS	Department of Assistive & Rehabilitative Services
DFPS	Department of Family & Protective Services
ED	Department of Education
TEA	Texas Education Agency
LEA	Local Education Agency (i.e. school district)

Special Education

ARD	Admission, Review & Dismissal
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment
FIE	Full Individual Evaluation
IEP	Individual Education Program/Plan
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MDR	Manifestation Determination Review

State Tests

STAAR	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
TELPAS	Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

Education

AP	Advanced Placement
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
ELL	English Language Learner
ELPS	English Language Proficiency Standards
ESC	Education Service Center
ESL	English as a Second Language
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GT	Gifted & Talented
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
PPCD	Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities
Pre-K	Pre-kindergarten
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills
TREx	Texas Student Records Exchange

CASA Advocacy

GAL	Guardian ad Litem
PMC	Permanent Managing Conservatorship
RTC	Residential Treatment Center
RTI	Response To Intervention
TMC	Temporary Managing Conservatorship

APPENDIX B: EDUCATION PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

All children & youth:

- Placement Authorization Form 2085
- Education Decision-Maker Form 2085E
- Birth Certificate
- Immunization Records
- School records, transcripts, progress notes, report cards
- Personal Graduation Plans
- Standardized education assessments
- Postsecondary education transcripts
- School correspondence
- School pictures
- Certificates, awards, letters of achievement
- Withdrawal notice from previous school

For children receiving special education or Section 504 services for a disability that affects the child's learning, the following documents should also be included in the education portfolio and the child's case file:

- Referrals for a special education assessment or evaluation
- Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee meeting notices and notes/minutes
- The Full Individual Evaluations (FIE), or other educational assessments and evaluations completed by the LEA
- The Child's Individualized Education Program or Plan (IEP)
- Individual Transition Plan for youth 14 and older
- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), as well as Functional Behavior Assessments
- Documentation of services provided under Section 504

APPENDIX C: DFPS HIGHER EDUCATION INFORMATION OVERVIEW

COLLEGE PROGRAMS/RESOURCES FOR DFPS FOSTER YOUTH, ADOPTED YOUTH & CERTAIN YOUTH THAT EXIT TO A PARENT OR NON-PARENT OR ENTER THE PCA PROGRAM-September 2017⁸⁸

What is the STATE COLLEGE AND TUITION WAIVER?

The waiver provides exemption of tuition and fees at Texas public institutions of higher education for youth formerly in Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) conservatorship, adopted youth, and certain other youth. Students must enroll in a state supported school or a dual credit course by their 25th birthday.

Who is Eligible?

All individuals in DFPS Conservatorship (substitute care) in one of the circumstances listed below.

FOSTER YOUTH:

- the day preceding the student's 18th birthday;
- the day of the student's 14th birthday, if also eligible for adoption on or after that day;
- the date the student graduates from high school or receives the equivalent of a high school diploma.

RETURN TO THE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY OF A PARENT:

- if a youth was age 14 and older on or after June 1, 2016 and in DFPS's Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC); OR
- if a youth was age 16 or older on or after June 1, 2016 and was in DFPS's Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC).

PMC TO A NON-PARENT:

- PMC was granted to a non-parent on or after September 1, 2009.

ADOPTED YOUTH:

- adoption occurred on or after September 1, 2009; OR
- adopted and the subject of an adoption assistance agreement for monthly financial assistance and Medicaid. (No age limit for college enrollment for these students.)

Dual Credit Courses

Students can use the waiver to enroll in a dual credit course that offers joint high school and college credit.

What is the EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) program?

The federal ETV program may provide up to \$5,000 an academic year to eligible students for college related expenses including rent, books, utilities, childcare, computers, personal expenses, transportation and tuition, if applicable. Funds awarded are based on the college's estimated cost of attendance.

Who is Eligible?

All individuals in DFPS Conservatorship (substitute care) in one of the circumstances listed below.

FOSTER YOUTH:

- who are at least 16 and likely to remain in care until 18; or
- who age out foster care but are not yet 21.

YOUTH WHO ENTER PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE (PCA):

- not yet age 21 and entered the PCA program after age 16

ADOPTED YOUTH:

- not yet age 21 and are adopted after turning age 16

OTHER:

- Texas Juvenile Justice Department - youth must be in the custody of or under the jurisdiction of a local juvenile probation department AND were in a Title IV-E placement receiving Title IV-E payments on the day they turn 18.
- Tribal youth in tribal foster care

Students age 21 up to age 23:

An eligible student who has participated in, applied for and been approved for ETV before his/her 21st birthday may remain eligible until the month of their 23rd birthday as long as they are continuously enrolled and making satisfactory academic progress toward completion of their school approved degree or certificate program.

*Note: Undocumented youth are not eligible for ETV.

Developed by the DFPS Transitional Living Services Program

What OTHER DFPS EDUCATION RESOURCES are available?

The federal **Preparation For Adult Living (PAL)** Services program assists older youth in foster care and former foster youth to prepare to transition to a successful adulthood.

Who is Eligible?

Youth in DFPS paid substitute care are the priority population for PAL services.

FOSTER YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS:

- who are at least age 16 or older and likely to remain in foster care until at least age 18.
- may qualify for PAL services up to their 21st birthday.

PAL Benefits/Services:

Transitional Living Allowance - Up to \$1,000 and must meet the qualification requirements to include completion of PAL Life Skills Training.

Aftercare Room and Board Assistance - Based on need and emergency, up to \$500 a month (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments) and have been in DFPS paid care at age 18 and meet qualification requirements.

Other - Independent living skills training, support services as needed (i.e., counseling, driver education).

PAL Staff Contact List:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/PAL_coordinators.asp

What schools, programs, and courses can be used with the STATE COLLEGE AND TUITION WAIVER?

Eligible students can attend any **Texas state-supported** colleges and universities, including public medical school, public dental schools, or public technical institutes.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- fees are waived if required for education purposes (i.e., lab or other mandatory fees).
- skills training programs offered at community and technical colleges must be funded with state formula funds to be eligible for the tuition waiver.
- DFPS PAL or Adoption Eligibility staff verify eligibility for the waiver letter (Form 1003). Students submit the waiver letter when registering for school.
- Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THCEB) offer outreach programs to ensure that foster youth in grades 9-12 are aware of the tuition and fee waiver.

As of January 1, 2016 each state college/university now has a Foster Care Student Liaison to help former foster youth access services and receive assistance.

Foster Care Student Liaison List: <http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/financialaid/tofa2.cfm?ID=429>

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provides helpful information needed for youth/young adults to plan for college at <http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/>

- Apply Texas - College Application https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX
- Compare Colleges Texas (2 and 4 year schools) <http://comparecollegetx.com/>

Statutory Citation:

Texas Education Code §§54.366, 54.367, 40 Texas Administrative Code §700.1630.

Developed by the DFPS Transitional Living Services Program

What schools, programs, and courses can be used with the EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER Program?

Eligible students can attend an *accredited or pre-accredited **private, public or non-profit** institution of higher education that:

- provides a bachelor's degree or not less than a two-year program that provides credit towards a degree or
- certification; or
- provides not less than a one-year program of training to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation; or
- offers training programs and have been in existence for at least two years preparing students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation (training may be less than a year).

Students must enroll in:

- at least 6 semester hours; or
- 3 semester hours if enrolled in a summer session or a dual college credit course.

Correspondence, Distance Education, or Continuing Education courses are allowed if part of a student's academic degree or certificate program. Prior approval by the ETV staff is needed to ensure proper school accreditation and course qualifications.

Students apply at: www.texasetv.com or call 1-877-268-4063.

More information about these college programs is available at the **Texas Youth Connection** website: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/college.asp>

*Note: all of the schools/programs listed above must be accredited or have been granted pre-accreditation status by an agency or organization that has been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Statutory Citation: P.L. 110-351, 42 U.S.C. §677, 40 Texas Administrative Code §700.1613

What other DFPS SCHOLARSHIPS may be available?

If a youth/young adult aged out of DFPS foster care, completed the PAL Life Skills Training Program, and met other requirements they may be eligible for scholarships. These funds can be used to supplement any school expenses not covered by the ETV program, scholarships, or federal grants.

DFPS SCHOLARSHIPS:

Freshmen Success Fund for Foster Youth (est. April 2013): This is a one-time grant of \$1,000 available for first time college freshmen formerly in DFPS foster care. These grants must cover basic, non-tuition related expenses such as books and supplies, computers and software, tools and uniforms, and transportation. Students must be enrolled in a Texas state supported college, university, or vocational school that accepts the tuition and fee waiver.

C. Ed Davis-PAL Scholarship (est. July 2012):

This scholarship is for basic, non-tuition needs for former foster youth who are majoring in government, political science, history, or other pre-law field. Scholarships are for \$1,000 per academic year and are available to sophomore, junior, or senior year students.

Note: Scholarships received may affect the amount of ETV funds to be awarded because they are factored in with other sources of funds received by the student.

More information is available at the **Texas Youth Connection** website: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/education/college.asp>

Developed by the DFPS Transitional Living Services Program

APPENDIX D: SCHOOL MEETING CHECKLIST

The following is a useful tool for questions to ask during meetings with school personnel:

- Who attended the meeting?
- Who is missing from the meeting?
- What information did you rely on to make decisions? Ask for copies of all important documents.
- What additional information do you need?
- What is the child's point of view?
- What support in and out of school can help the child?
- What is the plan?
- Who is responsible for following through on each component of the plan?
- What's the best way to follow up to the plan?
- When can the plan be completed?
- What is the goal/expected outcome for the child?
- Is this child eligible for Extended School Year (ESY) services? (Can this child benefit from ESY?)
- Does this child require an aide for transportation purposes (IEP)?

The following is a useful tool for meetings related to special education:

- What is the class size and student-to-teacher ratio? Does this match the recommendations on your CASA child's IEP?
- What are the ages and grades of the other students in the class? Does the work seem appropriate for your CASA child?
- Are children grouped by skill level? At what level are the students functioning in the proposed class placement?
- How does the school provide related services such as speech, occupational or physical therapy, or other specialized instruction? Do they use a "push in model" (bringing someone in to accommodate them in the classroom) or a "pull out model" (pulling a student out for special instruction outside their regular classroom)?
- How does the teacher incorporate positive reinforcement into the child's classroom setting?
- How long has the teacher been teaching at the school? How much experience does the teacher have working with students with disabilities similar to your CASA child's disability?

APPENDIX E: EDUCATION DECISION MAKER & SURROGATE PARENT ROLES

	Education Decision Maker	Surrogate Parent
Purpose	When a court appoints DFPS managing conservatorship, DFPS is responsible for all decisions related to the child. Tex. Fam. Code (TFC) §153.371 (10). DFPS can delegate, or share, responsibility for day-to-day education-related decisions with the Education Decision Maker (EDM). TFC §263.004 (a). However, in the case of a child with a disability, special education decisions must be made by a foster or surrogate parent.	Under state and federal law, a child in foster care who is eligible to receive special education services must have a foster or surrogate parent making all special education-related decisions for the child. 34 CFR 300.519(a); 34 CFR 300.30; Tex. Ed. Code §§29.001, 29.015, 29.0151.
Who appoints this person?	Usually DFPS . Sometimes, the court will designate an EDM.	Usually school districts . Sometimes, the court will designate a surrogate parent.
Who can serve in this role?	Usually the caregiver (i.e. foster parent, staff at residential facility, etc.)	If the child resides in a foster home, the foster parent can make special education decisions without being appointed as a surrogate parent. TEC § 29.015. Relatives, other caregivers, or CASA can also be appointed as surrogate parents. TEC § 29.0151. TFC §263.0025 (c).
Who can NOT serve in this role?	Although anyone can serve in this role, DFPS has discretion to designate the EDM.	DFPS, TEA, a school or district or any other agency involved in the education of the child. This means that a CPS or facility caseworker cannot act as surrogate parent for the child.
Responsibilities	As mentioned above, the EDM is responsible for day-to-day decisions such as enrolling a child in school, determining course selection, receiving report cards, approving field trips, etc. The DFPS caseworker may request the EDM notify or consult with the caseworker or supervisor on any of these matters before communicating a decision to the school. For more information, see form 2085E at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/site_map/forms.asp Note: The caseworker is still responsible for school selection.	A surrogate parent has the rights and responsibilities that a parent has under special education law , including the right to represent the child in matters relating to: (1) the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child, and (2) the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the child. 20 USC 1415; 34 CFR 300.519 Under TEC §29.001 (10), a surrogate parent must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a training program, • Visit the child and the child’s school, • Consult with persons involved in the child’s education, (including teachers, caseworkers, court-appointed volunteers, guardian ad litem, attorney ad litem, foster parents, and caretakers), • Review the child’s educational records, • Attend the child’s Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee meetings, • Exercise independent judgment in pursuing the child’s interests, AND • Exercise the child’s due process rights under state and federal special education law.
Training	Training on making education-related decisions is included in foster parent training. No additional training is required.	A foster parent can serve as parent for purposes of special education decision-making so long as the foster parent completes a surrogate training program before the next ARD meeting but no later than 90 days after appointment and the foster parent agrees to make decisions on the child’s behalf. TEC § 29.015.

		<p>If the district is unable to identify or locate a parent for a child with a disability or the foster parent of a child is unwilling or unable to serve as a parent, a surrogate parent must be appointed. Training for surrogate parents must be completed before the next ARD meeting but no later than 90 days after appointment. TEC § 29.0151.</p> <p>Continuing education is not required for foster parents or surrogate parents serving in this capacity. TEC §§ 29.015, 29.0151.</p>
Timing	DFPS must notify the court and child’s school of the designation of the EDM within five days of the adversarial hearing. If any changes are made to the EDM, DFPS must notify the school within five days and provide updated information in the permanency progress report. TFC §263.004.	The district must make “reasonable efforts” to appoint a surrogate parent within 30 days after a determination that the child needs a surrogate parent. 20 USC 1415(b)(2); 34 CFR 300.519(h)
Important documents	DFPS form 2085E is the form that will be provided to the school and the court to document who is acting as the EDM. This authority can also come from a court order.	Documentation from the school district or court order. DFPS form 2085E also identifies the surrogate parent.
Relationship between the EDM & surrogate parent	In the case of a child with a disability, the same individual may serve as both the EDM and surrogate parent, but this is not always the case.	The surrogate parent has decision making authority for special education-related decisions. Nonetheless, if there is a conflict between an EDM and a surrogate parent, all stakeholders and parties should collaborate to resolve the issue.

APPENDIX F: CHECKLIST OVERVIEW FOR CASA EDUCATION ADVOCATES

General Advocacy

- Confirm and convey your role as an advocate. Are you serving in the capacity as a volunteer? A Guardian ad Litem? An education decision maker? A surrogate parent? Invited member of the ARD committee?
- Respect the confidentiality of all child welfare and education records. Be discreet with whom and how you share information concerning your CASA child. Respect the privacy of your CASA child.
- Identify all the people involved in making education-related decisions for your CASA child.
- Communicate and collaborate with other stakeholders involved in the child's education. Relay both positive feedback and your concerns to the child's education decision maker, surrogate parent, caregiver, teacher, counselor, foster care liaison, DFPS education specialist, AAL, and/or the court.
- Determine where the child is in school and identify what services are available in the surrounding area to address the child's educational needs.
- The court order may grant CASA representatives access to the child's school records. Schools are likely to ask for a copy of the court order that reflects CASA participation.
- Make sure you have a current copy of the Education Decision Maker Form 2085E.
- If you anticipate a change in school placement, look at the testing calendar and other important school dates. Encourage timing for the move that will cause the least amount of interference with the child's academic progress.
- Support getting your CASA child enrolled within **three days** of a new school placement. The education decision maker, usually the caregiver, is the person who enrolls the child and you can also follow up with that individual.
- If there is a change in school placement, ask:
 - Were the records transferred by the school system's TREx within **10 days**?
 - Did the child receive credit? How they can catch up in their new school?
- The school district foster care liaison can assist in the child's enrollment and facilitate the transfer of school records.
- Ask whether the child has a green binder called the Education Portfolio at their placement. Follow up to ensure all important documents are included and find out if anything is missing.
- Find out what your CASA child is interested in. Encourage extracurricular activities and look for ways to get the child engaged in challenging coursework.
- Include education-related issues in your court report. Monitor the child's progress in school; ask the child and school staff about whether the educational needs of the child are being addressed and satisfied.
- Encourage and prepare the child to attend court to provide their perspective.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR SOME CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE

Children with Disabilities

- Find out if the school identified a disability and whether there was a determination that the child is entitled to services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Determine if there is an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child. The school must secure written consent from the caregiver to do an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for services. The school must respond/complete that evaluation within **45 school days** under Texas law.
- Inquire whether a surrogate parent has been appointed. If there is a need for a surrogate parent, the school has **30 school days** to appoint one or in some cases, a court may appoint the surrogate parent.
- The surrogate parent must complete a required training before the next ARD meeting but no later than within **90 days** of appointment.
- If you are appointed as a surrogate parent by the school district or the court, educate yourself on the child's disability and work with school staff to ensure the child has appropriate services in place.

Children Ages 0-5

- If your CASA child is younger than 3 years old and has a developmental delay or disability, speak with the child's pediatrician about a referral to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). Follow up to see whether the services meet the child's needs.
- Meet regularly with your CASA child even if they are an infant or toddler. Speak with the caregiver and caseworker and figure out if the child's development is on track. Ask whether Early Head Start (ages 0-3) or Head Start (ages 3-5) is available in the community. These programs promote the child's development, if appropriate.
- Children, ages 3, 4, 5 by Sept. 1, who were ever in the conservatorship of DFPS as a result of an adversary hearing or are currently in the conservatorship of DFPS are eligible for enrollment in the school district's free pre-kindergarten program. Follow up with the regional education specialist about the letter of verification for pre-K enrollment.

Postsecondary

- Help your CASA child identify a postsecondary goal. Encourage the youth to explore postsecondary education, vocational and technical training opportunities. You can encourage the youth by promoting campus visits, helping search for scholarships and locating school supports like Upward Bound, etc.
- There are many services and financial benefits available to children as they transition out of foster care. Identify the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) specialist working with your CASA child. Find out about important deadlines and milestones. Take the time to make sure your CASA child understands and meets these requirements.
- Encourage enrollment in a dual credit or college level course to trigger free lifetime tuition and fee waiver. Have the youth contact their PAL worker for information.
- Help your CASA child navigate the complicated processes of FAFSA and college applications.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Foster Care & Student Success: Texas Systems Working together to Transform Education Outcomes of Students in Foster Care (“Resource Guide”), TEA, DFPS, and Children’s Commission 2014, p. 15. www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/resource-guide.pdf.
- ² Texas Blueprint Implementation Data Workgroup. (2015, November). Texas commits to transform education outcomes of students in foster care: Findings from the Texas Blueprint Implementation Data Workgroup. <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/1168/texas-blueprint-data-workgroup-infographic.pdf>.
- ³ Id.
- ⁴ Id.
- ⁵ Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care (2014). <http://formedfamiliesforward.org/images/Fostering-success-in-Education-Jan-2014.pdf>.
- ⁶ Id.
- ⁷ See Resource Guide, pg. 82.
- ⁸ Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, Public Law 110-351 (2008).
- ⁹ Texas Family Code (TFC) §264.1072.
- ¹⁰ Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law 114-95 (2015).
- ¹¹ For further information regarding the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA’s) testing calendar visit: <https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/calendars/>.
- ¹² Texas Education Code (TEC) § 33.904.
- ¹³ Additional education laws, policy and practice guidance can be found in the Resource Guide mentioned above.
- ¹⁴ See 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (b).
- ¹⁵ Uninterrupted Scholars Act, Public Law 112-278 (2013).
- ¹⁶ Requires consent of all parties, including youth.
- ¹⁷ TFC §153.371(10).
- ¹⁸ TFC §263.004.
- ¹⁹ This chart highlights the main differences; it is not a complete list.
- ²⁰ TFC §107.006 (b).
- ²¹ TFC §107.006 (d).
- ²² TFC §107.002 (i).
- ²³ TFC §263.306; TFC §263.5031.
- ²⁴ See TFC §107.031(c).
- ²⁵ While these may not be mandatory for CASA, it is a way for advocates to best support the education of students.
- ²⁶ Burley, M. & Halpern, M. (2001). Educational attainment of foster youth: Achievement and graduation outcomes for children in state care p. 9. Retrieved from <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/773>.
- ²⁷ TEC §25.001(g)-(g-1).
- ²⁸ Id.
- ²⁹ TEC §25.002(g).
- ³⁰ TFC §264.115, See also DFPS Child Protective Services Handbook (section 15110) at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_x15000.asp#CPS_15100.
- ³¹ See TEC §25.002(g).
- ³² 42 U.S. Code § 11431, et seq.
- ³³ In some school districts, the McKinney Vento liaison and the foster care liaison are the same person but this is not always the case.
- ³⁴ See Resource Guide, Ch. 8.
- ³⁵ See 34 CFR 99.31.
- ³⁶ TEC §25.007(b)(1).
- ³⁷ 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 74.26(a)(1).
- ³⁸ TEC §25.085.
- ³⁹ TEC §25.092.
- ⁴⁰ 19 TAC §74.24, 19 TAC §74.26.
- ⁴¹ TEC §25.087.
- ⁴² See TEC §37.0011, DFPS Child Protective Services Handbook (section 15110), Designation of Education Decision-Maker (Form 2085E) and Placement Authorization (Form 2085).
- ⁴³ There may be an account number or login that can be used/shared with the parties who can legally have access. School personnel may be unclear of the role of CASA and their role and say “no” because they don’t understand or are unclear. Work locally to be able to access this information.
- ⁴⁴ TEC §29.081.
- ⁴⁵ See SB 1404 (83rd Legislative Session).

- ⁴⁶ See HB 5 (83rd Legislative Session).
- ⁴⁷ TEC §§ 28.0212; 28.02121.
- ⁴⁸ More information about the Foundation High School Program and graduation requirements can be found on TEA's webpage: https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Graduation_Requirements/.
- ⁴⁹ TEC §28.0212(a); See also, Baskin (2013), "Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care," Texas Association of School Boards, p.16.
- ⁵⁰ Op.Tex. Atty Gen No. MW-43 (1979). Retrieved from <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/opinions/opinions/46white/op/1979/pdf/mw0043.pdf>.
- ⁵¹ TEC §25.001(f).
- ⁵² State guidance related to these provisions can be found at the Texas Department of Agriculture, NSLP Handbook: Administrators Reference Manual (ARM), Determining Eligibility - Special Milk Programs: 27.24, 27.33 and Section Four: 4.13, 4.15, 4.42, and 4.60.
- ⁵³ See TEA Guidance on Procedural Safeguards at <https://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147497556>.
- ⁵⁴ For more information, visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.
- ⁵⁵ For the remainder of this section, reference is made to the foster or surrogate parent with the assumption that often the right to make educational decisions is limited for biological parents with CPS involvement.
- ⁵⁶ 34 CFR 300.20; 34 CFR 300.519 (g).
- ⁵⁷ 34 CFR 300.519(c).
- ⁵⁸ TEC 29.015(b) and 19 TAC 89.1047(b).
- ⁵⁹ 34 CFR 300.519(d).
- ⁶⁰ TEC §29.0151.
- ⁶¹ 34 CFR 300.519(h).
- ⁶² TEC §29.0151; 19 TAC §89.1047
- ⁶³ TEC §29.004 (c).
- ⁶⁴ TEC §29.004 (a)(1).
- ⁶⁵ See 34 CFR 300.300(b)(4).
- ⁶⁶ TEC §29.003. See also 19 TAC 89.1040
- ⁶⁷ TEC §29.003 (b); 19 TAC §89.1035.
- ⁶⁸ See 34 CFR 300.8.
- ⁶⁹ See 19 TAC 89.1055
- ⁷⁰ 19 TAC §89.1035.
- ⁷¹ 34 CFR 300.304(c)(5).
- ⁷² TEC § 25.007(b)(9).
- ⁷³ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(e); TEC §25.007(b)(9).
- ⁷⁴ 34 CFR 300.101(a).
- ⁷⁵ Id; TEC §37.004.
- ⁷⁶ 34 CFR 300.530(e).
- ⁷⁷ 34 CFR 300.536.
- ⁷⁸ Office of Head Start definition found at: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness>.
- ⁷⁹ See DFPS Child Protective Services Handbook (section 15211).
- ⁸⁰ See 45 CFR 1305.2(1).
- ⁸¹ For more information, see TEA Early Childhood Education in Texas at <https://tea.texas.gov/earlychildhoodeducation.aspx>; Resource Guide, Ch. 10.
- ⁸² TEC §29.153(b)(6).
- ⁸³ See Resource Guide, Ch. 13.
- ⁸⁴ Conley, D. T. (2007). Redefining college readiness, Volume 3. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, Pg. 5. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539251.pdf>.
- ⁸⁵ For more information, see United Friends of the Children. <https://www.unitedfriends.org>.
- ⁸⁶ TEC §54.366; 54.367, 40 TAC §700.1630.
- ⁸⁷ See Resource Guide, Ch. 13, pg. 106.
- ⁸⁸ For more information about Preparation for Adult Living and other DFPS Educational resources, visit: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Preparation_For_Adult_Living/default.asp.

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