

# Foster Care

Students in foster care face unusual educational challenges. It is our goal to provide students in foster care with educational stability and remove barriers to, and provide opportunities for, academic excellence for these students. In order to achieve this purpose, the district will work collaboratively with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Children's Division (CD) of the Missouri Department of Social Services.

*Foster Care* – Twenty-four-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents/guardians and for whom the CD has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placement in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions and pre-adoptive homes, regardless of whether the home, shelter, facility or institution is licensed or receives payments from the state.

*Foster Care Student* – Any pre-K–12 student who is residing in a foster care setting in this state or who is awaiting foster care.

*School of Origin* – The school or preschool in which the student was enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. If the student's placement changes, the school of origin is the school or preschool in which the student was enrolled at the time of the change.

The district designates the following individual as the liaison for foster care students: Director of Special Services; 1017 E. Main Street, Richmond, MO 64085; Phone (816) 776-6912 x5001; Fax (816) 776-5554; E-mail: [cquinn@richmondspartans.org](mailto:cquinn@richmondspartans.org).

The liaison will provide assistance regarding all aspects of the enrollment, placement, transfer, and withdrawal of children in foster care and serve as the point of contact for DESE and the CD. The liaison will also work with DESE and the CD to implement the district's complaint resolution process.

Students in a foster care placement located within the boundaries of the district will be educated in the school of origin unless it is not in the best interest of the student to do so. A student placed in the school of origin will remain in the school of origin for the duration of the time he or she is in foster care. If it is not in the best interest of the student to stay in the school of origin, the Richmond R-XVI School District will immediately enroll the student, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, and will contact the school of origin to obtain relevant records.

Foster care students who attend school in the district because attending the school of origin was not in their best interest will be initially placed in the same courses and

programs the students were in while attending the previous district to the extent this district offers such courses and programs. Such placements may include, but are not limited to: honors classes; vocational, technical and career pathway courses; and International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), English Learner (EL), special education and gifted programs. If necessary, the district will waive course or program prerequisites or other preconditions for placement in courses or programs offered at the district. After placement, the district may perform additional evaluations to ensure that the student has been placed appropriately and may change the student's placement after consultation with the student's foster parent.

Within three days of the student enrolling, the liaison will organize a meeting or consultation to determine which placement is in the best interest of the student. The meeting or consultation will include a representative of the CD; the foster parents; the parents/guardians and student, if appropriate; and any other person requested by the student, the foster parents or the CD who has a special relationship with the student. These individuals will be considered the best interest determination (BID) team and will determine the best placement for the student. If the BID team cannot reach a consensus as to the best placement, the representative from the CD will make the final determination.

The district of placement may bill the district of residence for local tax effort in accordance with law.

If the parent/guardian, foster parent, student or educational decision maker disputes that the placement assigned by the BID team or CD is in the student's best interest, he or she may contact the liaison in an effort to resolve the dispute. If the liaison is not able to resolve the dispute, the parent/guardian, foster parent, student or educational decision maker may request a conference with the superintendent or designee. The superintendent or designee will meet with the parent/guardian, foster parent, student or educational decision maker and the pertinent members of the BID team in an effort to resolve the dispute.

If the superintendent or designee is unable to resolve the dispute, the parent/guardian or educational decision maker may appeal the placement to: State Foster Care Coordinator; P.O. Box 480; Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; (573) 751-4192.

If the BID team determines that the school of origin is the best placement for a foster care student, the student will be transported to the school of origin in accordance with the transportation plan developed in collaboration with the CD. Transportation will be provided in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with law.

Disputes over transportation will be handled in the same manner as disputes over placement.

The foster care liaison will provide foster parents and other legal guardians' access to student records. In accordance with law, the district will allow a child placement agency access to a foster care student's records for the purposes of assisting the school transfer or placement of a student and fulfilling educational case management responsibilities required by the juvenile officer or by law.

The liaison will ensure that student records are properly transferred between the Richmond R-XVI School District and any other district from or to which foster students transfer. When a request involves a foster care student, the liaison will:

1. Respond within three business days to a request for records by another district, and
2. Request records from other districts within two days of enrolling a student.

If a student in foster care is absent from school due to a decision by a court or child-placing agency to change the student's placement or due to a verified court appearance or related court-ordered activity, the grades and credit of the student will be calculated as of the date the student left school, and the district will not lower the student's grade as a result of absence under these circumstances.

The district will encourage foster care students to participate in extracurricular activities and assist them in joining extracurricular activities. Locally imposed application deadlines for participation in extracurricular activities will be waived for foster care students who are otherwise eligible to participate in the activities. Participation in activities governed by the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) will be permitted in accordance with the rules established by MSHSAA. Foster care students are automatically eligible for participation in the district's free nutrition program.

In order to facilitate timely graduation of foster care students, the district will:

1. Waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another school. If such course work is not waived, the district will provide reasonable justification for the denial.
2. Accept the results of exit exams, end-of-course exams, nationally norm-referenced tests or alternative testing from another school to satisfy district testing requirements related to graduation.
3. Accept for credit full or partial course work completed at the previous school attended in accordance with district policy.

If a foster care student who enrolls in the district at the beginning of or during his or her senior year cannot meet the district's graduation requirements by the end of the senior year, even after all alternatives have been considered, the liaison will contact the student's previous district to determine whether the student is eligible to receive a diploma from the previous school.

The Richmond R-XVI School District will award a diploma to foster care students who transfer out of the district at the beginning of or during the senior year if, considering all courses, tests and attendance at the school to which the student transferred, the student has met the Richmond R-XVI School District graduation requirements.