Back to School

*Information for DCYF Social Workers*

# Due to COVID-19, many districts are offering a choice between in-person attendance, remote learning, or a combination of the two. DCYF is allowing caregivers to choose the school option that best fits their family needs and centers the student’s best interest.

**Educational Stability**: Students in foster care have a right to remain in their [school of origin,](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf) *even when placed outside the district.* If school of origin is NOT in best interest, the student is entitled to [immediate](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Foster%20care%20Immediate%20Enrollment_WA%2010-19%20ADA.pdf) [enrollment.](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/Foster%20care%20Immediate%20Enrollment_WA%2010-19%20ADA.pdf) **Priority is keeping students connected to the school they’ve been attending**.

# A [Best Interest Determination](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/fostercare/pubdocs/fostercareschoolselection_wa.pdf) must be completed prior to changing school placement.

**School Notification Form**: the [School Notification Form](https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/forms/09-093.pdf) must be provided to the district Foster Care Liaison when a child changes placement[. Foster Care Liaison contact information is found here.](https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/foster-care/foster-care-liaisonsdcyf-contacts)

**Transportation:** work with the district [Foster Care Liaison](https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/foster-care/foster-care-liaisonsdcyf-contacts) to set this up when the child is placed out-of- district. Transportation billing instructions found [here.](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/bulletinsmemos/bulletins2017/b099-17.pdf)

**Additional Info:**

* **Immunizations**: Starting August 1, 2020, school immunization rules are changing. Specifically, immunization records turned in to schools are required to be medically verified; Tdap vaccine will be required for 7th grade entry instead of 6th grade; and the definition of conditional status has been clarified. For more information, see [OSPI’s Immunization Bulletin.](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/bulletinsmemos/bulletins2020/B046-20.pdf)
* **The Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO):** [OEO](https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en) supports students and families to address concerns (including IEPs), find solutions and resolve conflict with K-12 public schools. Call toll free 1- 866-297-2597 or email at oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov.
* **Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT)**: [P-EBT](https://medium.com/%40waOSPI/what-is-pandemic-ebt-a7a086fcaf94) is a new and temporary food benefit to help families buy groceries because schools were closed. Each child who was enrolled in K-12 school, and qualified for free or reduced-price meals before the school closures in March, is eligible for up to $399 in benefits. (Students in foster care are categorically eligible for free school meals.)

*Example: Family has 3 foster children. 3 x 399 = $1,197 total benefits*

If a caregiver was denied benefits, there may have been an error. Encourage caregivers to reapply if their school-age foster children were in their home during school closures and were denied benefits.

**P-EBT Application must be completed by August 31st** or the beginning of the new school year (whichever is later). Two ways to apply:

1. **Online:** [www.WashingtonConnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org/) (on the application, choose ‘Pandemic EBT—Emergency School Meals Program’ box in the Food Assistance section) OR
2. **Call:** 877–501–2233 (DSHS Customer Service Contact Center—Language translation available)

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