

New Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL) Information at a Glance

2022-2023 School Year

WELCOME! Thank you for taking on the important role of CWEL for your district. This document is intended to provide a broad overview of the role of CWEL, and the federal and state laws related to educational stability for children and youth in foster care.

Role of a CWEL

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 22-32-138, [House Bill 18-1306](#), and [House Bill 22-1374](#), each school district and the state Charter School Institute (CSI), shall designate an employee of the school district or CSI to act as the child welfare education liaison for the district or for state charter schools. In lieu of designating an employee, a school district or the state charter school institute may contract with an individual to act as the child welfare education liaison.

- The duties of the liaison should include, need not be limited to: working with child placement agencies, county departments, and the state department of human services to facilitate the prompt and appropriate placement, transfer, and enrollment in school of students in out-of-home placement.
- Attend or arrange a school district designee to attend Best Interest Determination (BID) meetings at the request of child welfare agencies. [Click here](#) for an FAQ document on BIDs.
- By August 15th of every school year, each school district and CSI shall report to the state coordinator for foster care education the name and contact information of the CWEL.
- There are other key parts of state law and ESSA that prohibit delaying transfer of records or enrollment because of fees owed (book fines), costs for uniforms, lab fees, etc.

Note: Effective August 10, 2017, pursuant to [HB17-1301](#), a school district shall not withhold, and shall ensure that a school of the school district does not withhold records required for enrollment in another school or institution of higher education or the diploma, transcript, or grades of any student who fails to pay any assessed fine or fee, to return or replace textbooks or library resources, or to return or replace any school property at the completion of any semester or school year.

- A school district or school in which a student in out-of-home placement is enrolled shall waive all fees that would otherwise be assessed against the student, including but not limited to any general fees, fees for books, fees for lab work, fees for participation in in-school or extracurricular activities, and fees for before-school or after-school programs. NOTE: Students in foster care are categorically eligible for free lunch and are not required to fill out a free lunch application. If they are eligible for lunch for one day, they are eligible for the entire school year.
- The school district or school shall not limit the opportunity of a student in out-of-home placement to participate in in-school and extracurricular activities and before-school and after-school programs due to waiver of the participation fees.

NEW IN 2018-2019: [HB18-1348](#) allows foster parents and kinship providers access to educational records for children and youth in foster care. This bill allows schools to grant access to student information systems (e.g. Infinite Campus or Power School) for foster parents and kinship providers to access educational information such as grades and attendance.

CWEL support and guidance

Contact the State Coordinator for Foster Care Education for:

- Questions related to collaboration between child welfare agencies (Best Interest Determination process, educational rights, best practices in serving highly mobile students, etc.)
- Disputes related to the Best Interest Determination process
- Technical support and professional development for school districts
- Contact information: Jamie Burciaga, (303)518-5938, Burciaga_J@cde.state.co.us

Foster Care Education Webpage

(https://www.cde.state.co.us/studentsupport/fostercare_index)

- A list of CWELs in Colorado is housed on this site along with resources to support CWELs and child welfare agencies in ESSA implementation and postsecondary transition/scholarship information.
- CWEL toolkit provides links to information by topic
- Note: there are Colorado specific laws related to foster care that expand the educational rights for students in foster care. This website is designed to address Colorado's unique laws and organizations that assist young people in foster care.

Best Practices at a Glance

Students in foster care are afforded educational stability rights under ESSA and HB18-1306. Although compliance with these laws are sufficient to meet minimum requirements, there are several considerations for districts to offer additional educational supports.

- Consider rights afforded to McKinney-Vento Eligible Youth that are not in ESSA for Foster Care such as being eligible for services for an entire school year.
- Have a clearly outlined dispute resolution process in collaboration with county child welfare.
- Establish an MOU between surrounding counties as placement in foster homes outside of the county of origin occur frequently.
- Create student-centered capstone projects and competency-based measures to determine course completion and progress toward graduation.
- Connect the student in foster care with a building-level advocate (school counselor, teacher, school admin, etc.) to ease transitions.
- Be intentional about connecting the right person to attend a Best Interest Determination meeting and collect as much educational information about the student ahead of time. The educator's voice is ESSENTIAL in determining appropriate school placement.
- Provide targeted postsecondary guidance including FAFSA and independent student classification (documentation, processes, additional scholarships, etc.).
- Work with Federal Programs administrators to plan on using Title II and Title IV funds to enhance educational supports and professional development for staff.

- Engage foster families on educational progress and offer support through the district with school supplies.
- Coordinate with neighboring districts and counties to streamline common communication and transportation practices.