

With so many changes in education... What is my role? How do I navigate?

Barriers Related to Enrollment or Registration

Many school districts have moved to entirely online registration and enrollment processes to reduce face-to-face contacts with families. Furthermore, with concerns regarding space and various options for enrollment, most districts are requiring that returning students either re-enroll by the same process as new students or complete some additional steps for online check-in or registration procedures this fall.

We have had reports from some counties that these online processes have created barriers for students in foster care. For students changing enrollment after a BID this fall, the online process may not take into account that students in foster care may be enrolled without all the supporting documents and forms that would normally be required. For students remaining in school of origin, online systems may bar students from registering because they are no longer living in the school's catchment area.

Students remaining in a school of origin continue to be entitled to enrollment at that school, even if they have moved away from the area. (This includes a designated receiving school for students matriculating from one school to the next.) **Students enrolling in a new school continue to be entitled to immediate enrollment regardless of circumstances.** If you experience any barriers to enrollment, contact the school district's Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL) immediately. If you are unable to reach the CWEL or continue to encounter barriers for more than 24 hours, please reach out to me by phone or by email for additional support.

Decision Making for Online and Remote Learning

Many school districts are offering online or remote options for the 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic. **Every school district has a different approach to these offerings, which may affect whether or not a caregiver can choose an option or whether the decision must be made in a Best Interest Determination.**

Any change in school initiated by a foster care provider that moves a student away from their school of origin jeopardizes educational stability and therefore requires a Best Interest Determination prior to the enrollment change. Many remote and online options offered by school districts this fall constitute a change in enrollment away from the home school to an online school within the district. These options therefore require a BID. **Any remote option that allows a student to continue to be enrolled and engaged at the same school they have previously attended will maintain school stability**, and providers are welcome to choose between in-person and remote options that allow the student to remain engaged with and enrolled at the same school.

If you have any questions about these distinctions or decisions, please feel free to contact me for further guidance or more information.

Homeschooling

Talk of homeschooling has increased significantly in recent months. Homeschooling occurs when a parent chooses to educate their school-aged child entirely at home and therefore disenrolls their child from school. **Homeschooling is different from the remote or online education provided through an accredited school or district.** Colorado education laws require that the decision to homeschool be made *by a parent*, and that all home-based education be provided *by a parent*. For this reason, **students in out-of-home placement may not be homeschooled by a foster caregiver.** However, a student in out-of-home placement may participate in any online or remote educational program that takes place in the home where the student is enrolled in an accredited school. Note that enrollment in such programs will require a Best Interest Determination if they constitute a change in enrollment away from the school of origin.

Notifications of Placement

As schools begin to return to in-person learning, the possibility exists that a student could become ill and need to go home during the school day. This fall more than ever, **it is essential that schools have up-to-date information about which students are in out-of-home placement and who the appropriate points of contact are for each student, including caregivers and caseworkers.** It may be helpful for workers to reach out to CWELs as well as contacts and supports within the school building to ensure that information is current.

Because some schools are offering remote learning this fall--and others may need to transition to remote learning in the case of an outbreak in the building--it is also important that schools **receive updated information about the availability of educational technology** if a student's placement changes.

Thank you for your time and attention, and your support of the educational needs of the children and youth in your care. Again, **for immediate support in navigating any barriers with a school district, please contact the district's Child Welfare Education Liaison.** An up-to-date directory of CWELs with contact information can always be accessed on:

1. Google Drive through CDHS

or

2. CDE website

https://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/fostercare_index