

Supporting Students in Foster Care Guidance

Last updated July 2026

Introduction

This guidance document was created to equip schools with the tools and resources to support a strong start to the school year for students in foster care. This includes mandatory compliance items as well as best practices for supporting students at intake and throughout enrollment. It is not an exhaustive list of everything that would be beneficial for students in foster care, but rather highlights the most critical items to prioritize at the start of the school year and when enrolling students mid-year. Supplemental guidance can be found in the supporting documents linked throughout.

How to identify which students are in foster care

#1 Use the Confidential Services - Foster Care Module in OASIS to identify students on your school's roster who have the Foster Care flag. Resources, including a user guide, videos, and self-paced course on how to use the Module are available at the OASIS Resources SharePoint site. Once identified, conduct personal outreach to ensure that the needs of the student are being met. Welcome them to your school, especially if they are newly enrolled. Note that Insight includes a Foster Care sub-group (accountability group) filter that can also be used to identify active students in foster care.

#2 Your school's Designated Liaison receives the ACS Official placement notification letter from a foster care agency.

#3: Student Services Managers email Principals and School-Based Designated Liaisons a monthly report of all students in foster care on their school roster.

Schools may also receive communication from a student and/or family directly. The Designated Liaison should engage the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) Foster Care Coordinator to confirm. [Click here](#) for a list of contact information for all Foster Care Coordinators (bottom of the page).

What steps should be taken right away

Updating Contact Information

The Designated Liaison is responsible for ensuring that pupil accounting secretaries and other appropriate staff update OASIS accurately and in a timely manner. When updating a student's address in OASIS, schools must retain the contact information of the parent or adoptive parent while also recording the contact information for the foster parent and foster care agency staff identified on the official ACS Placement, Trial Discharge, and Final Discharge Notification letters.

Schools can access guidance on recording parent, foster parent, and agency contact information in OASIS through the OASIS Resources. This resource provides instructions on how to add a new adult contact without deleting existing contact information.

Establishing Systems of Support

Ensure that every student in foster care receives a daily check-in from a School Counselor, STH Community Coordinator, or Bridging the Gap Social Worker or Caring adult. Document all check-ins in the OASIS Confidential Services - Foster Care Module using the "Student Check-In" service entry.

School-Based Designated Liaisons must also meet with their assigned Central Office Foster Care Coordinator at least three times per school year to review student needs, coordinate supports, monitor progress, and ensure appropriate follow-up and interventions when needed.

Maintaining Contact with Parents

The parent /adoptive parent of a child in foster care retains the right to continue to receive information about their child's academic and behavioral progress and to make all educational decisions for the child unless the foster care agency/foster parent presents a court order to the school indicating otherwise. The parent /adoptive parent is the parent for special education decision-making purposes and must be contacted for consent to all special education evaluations and services. However, when a surrogate parent has been appointed for the student, the parent has designated a person in parental relation pursuant to General Obligations Law § 5-1551, or a judge has named someone else to provide consent, that individual must be contacted to provide consent in the same manner as that of a birth/adoptive parent. See the [Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual \(SOPM\)](#) beginning at the section "Definition of a Parent" for more information.

If a student in foster care is subject to disciplinary action, the school shall provide notice in accordance with Chancellor's Regulation A-443 to the foster parent, foster care agency, and the parent /adoptive parent, unless the foster care agency presents a court order to the school terminating the parents' rights or otherwise limiting their ability to participate in school meetings or hearings. The parent/adoptive parent retains the right to appear at the suspension hearing.

Review all Order of Protection flags in OASIS and ensure that a current hard copy of the court order is maintained in the student's confidential file. Confirm that all appropriate staff members who need the information to support the student's safety have access to a copy of the order. If the school does not have a copy or is unsure whether the order remains active, contact the assigned foster care agency in writing to verify its status and request the appropriate documentation. Please copy the NYCPS Foster Care Office Coordinator assigned to your district on the email. Please note that not all students in foster care have an Order of Protection. assigned foster care agency in writing to verify its status and request the appropriate documentation. Please copy the NYCPS Foster Care Office Coordinator assigned to your

district on the email. **Please note that not all students in foster care have an Order of Protection.**

Partnering with Foster Care Agencies

Under the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), schools may share education records and information regarding a student in foster care with foster care agency staff. **A Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), release from the parent is not required.**

- The New York City Administration for Children's Services has developed a template letter that foster care agencies are required to use.
- Records requested may include report cards, attendance, transcripts, disciplinary records, special education records, and other documents.
- Foster care agencies may request records to consider during the Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting. The BID process for students in foster care is a federally mandated procedure under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Its purpose is to ensure educational stability for children in foster care by determining the most appropriate school placement when a child enters foster care or experiences a change in placement. For the purpose of maintaining school stability, and in accordance with NY State Education Law §3244, ACS presumes that all school-age children who enter foster care will remain in their school of origin unless a Best Interest Determination (BID) states that it is in the child's best interests to transfer schools. The foster care agency determines the child's school placement with input from the parent, child, and school. ACS must approve any transfers, and the Family Court will resolve any disputes. Once a determination is made, the school should collaborate with the foster care agency, [NYCPS Foster Care office](#), and ACS to:
 - Facilitate school transfer (if necessary)
 - Facilitate student transportation
- Foster care agency representatives also qualify as custodians for the purposes of accessing NYCSA and other parent portals. Upon receiving an official ACS placement notification letter regarding a student in the agency's care, the school must add the Foster Agency Education Specialist, Case Planner and Ed Specialist Supervisor with the correct authorization, relationship and resides with flag (taking the address from the BIOU), enter the agency point in OASIS with authorization code and provide the agency with the student's NYCSA Account Creation Code.
 - Below is the list of designated foster care agency points of contact, along with ATS instructions for granting NYCSA access:

[Agency point for NYCSA](#)

[NYCPS NYCSA Deck](#)

Transportation Eligibility for Students in Foster Care

All students in foster care are entitled to free transportation to and from school, either via OMNY card or school bus, as outlined below. Students who are discharged from foster care have the right to transportation to their school of origin for the remainder of the school year, as well as for an additional year if that year constitutes the terminal grade for the school.

Notification Procedures: Within 24 hours of a placement or change in placement, the foster care agency will notify the school via email. The foster care agency should CC the Foster Care Transportation Central office mailbox (FosterCaretransport@schools.nyc.gov).. Upon receiving the placement notification, the **school is responsible for:**

1. **Updating the student's address in OASIS Immediately**
2. **Returning the second section of the placement notification form (School Input Form) to ACS within 3 days**
3. **Submitting a transportation exception request**, if the student is eligible for busing

Students in foster care are eligible to receive the following transportation support:

1. **OMNY cards:** Provided to students in grades Pre-k through grade 12 who do not receive or are in the process of being assigned school bus service. Students enrolled in a 3-K program who do not have an IEP recommending specialized transportation are eligible for an OMNY card only, if they exceed height requirements to ride for free on subways and local buses, as set forth in MTA Regulations. In addition, their parent/guardian can access a MetroCard from their child's school to transport their child to and from school.
2. **Curb-to-School Busing:** Provided to students who are recommended for curb-to-school busing on their IEP or are residing 0.5 miles or more from their school and are in grades K-6, or grade 7 or 8 with an IEP and residing outside of the borough from their school of enrollment.
3. **Stop-to-School Busing:** Provided to students residing 0.5 miles or more from their school who are in Grades K-6, and grade 7 or 8 with an IEP.

How to request school bus service for eligible students:

- If the student resides 0.5 miles or more from their school and in Pre-k, grade K-6, or 7 or 8 grade with an IEP, a transportation exception request form must be submitted.
 - Link to the Transportation Exception Request form available on Support Hub [here](#).
- If the student is recommended for yellow bus service on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and enrolled in District 1-32, email your OPT Transportation Liaison.
 - Link to OPT Transportation Liaison contact available on the Info Hub [here](#).
 - **Note:** A transportation exception request is **NOT REQUIRED** for students recommended specialized transportation on their current IEP.

How to access student route information:

3. School staff must review their [school ridership](#) or [student profile](#) and share student route details with the parent/guardian.
4. The parent/guardian must contact the child's school or access student route information using [NYC Schools Account](#). For more information, visit the NYCPS family facing [page](#).

How to access Student OMNY cards and Parent/Guardian MetroCard's:

Student OMNY cards and Parent/Guardian MetroCard's are issued by the school.

- To request/order SFC Parent/Guardian cards, schools must submit the following application available in the Info Hub: [Application for STH / Parent MetroCards 2025 -2026 School Year \(Page 1 of 9\)](#)

Transportation Exception Requests (Summer & Fall):

Submit transportation exception requests for eligible students who are newly placed in foster care or who experience a placement change. To ensure transportation services are in place for the /First Day of School (FDOS) transportation exception requests must be submitted by **June 30th** each year. Prior to submitting the request, verify that the student's current address has been updated in **OASIS**, as transportation eligibility and routing are based on the address reflected in the system.

What supports are critical once enrolled

Children in foster care face tremendous hardships, with the separation from their home and family of origin serving as a traumatic experience, along with whatever other challenges they may have experienced prior to separation.

One of the most important steps in supporting students in foster care is connecting them to supportive adults at school. This can be the School Counselor, a Bridging the Gap Social Worker, Community Coordinator, or another adult who can build a meaningful relationship, connect them to resources, liaise with their families and/or foster care agencies, and serve as a consistent, positive presence in their lives.

Trusted adult best practices when working with students in foster care include:

- referring the student to a tutoring or mentoring program
- helping coordinate transportation to before or after school activities
- engaging/referring the student in individual or group counseling
- doing a daily check-in/check-out
- advocating to ensure the student receives all IEP services
- ensuring the student is connected to a college counselor, if one is available
- after one day of absence, reaching out to the Foster Parent and the Foster Care Agency point person (Case Planner and Educational Specialist), following the tiered response protocol. Log the adequate reason received regarding the absence in ILOG. This is required for K-8 and highly recommended for students in 3-K/Pre-K and 9-12.

The [transfer student toolkit](#) may have additional applicable information and policies relevant to supporting students in foster care who change school placement during high school. Please ensure that your school is **consistently following the BID process** to support educational stability for students in foster care.

Need Additional Support?

Coaching and support are available to schools via Designated Liaison trainings (liaisons are identified in the School Consolidated Plan), the [Students in Foster Care webpage](#), and [district foster care coordinators](#).