

VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION NO. 6173.1

ADOPTED: 03/15/21

CLASSIFICATION: Instruction

REVISED:

SUBJECT: Education for Foster Youth

DEFINITIONS

Foster youth: A child who has been removed from his/her home pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 309, is the subject of a petition filed under Welfare and Institutions Code 300 or 602, or has been removed from his/her home and is the subject of a petition filed under Welfare and Institutions Code 300 or 602 or is a nonminor who is under the transition jurisdiction of a juvenile court, as described in Welfare and Institutions Code 450, and satisfies the criteria specified in Education Code 42238.01.

Person Holding the Right to Make Educational Decisions: A responsible adult appointed by a court pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code 361 or 726.

School of Origin: The school that the foster youth attended when permanently housed, the school in which he/she was last enrolled, or attended within the preceding 15 months and with which the youth is connected. The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) liaison, in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the foster child and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the child, shall determine, in the best interest of the foster child, the school that shall be deemed the school of origin.

Expanded School of Origin Rights:

1. At the initial detention or placement, or any subsequent change in placement of a foster child, the local educational agency serving the foster child shall allow the foster child to continue his or her education in the school of origin for the duration of the jurisdiction of the court.
2. If the jurisdiction of the court is terminated before the end of an academic year, the local educational agency shall allow a former foster child who is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive, to continue his or her education in the school of origin through the duration of the academic school year.
3. If the jurisdiction of the court is terminated while a foster child is in high school, the local educational agency shall allow the former foster child to continue his or her education in the school of origin through graduation.

4. To ensure that the foster child has the benefit of matriculating with his or her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns of school districts, if the foster child is transitioning between school grade levels, the local educational agency shall allow the foster child to continue in the school district of origin in the same attendance area, or, if the foster child is transitioning to a middle school or high school, and the school designated for matriculation is in another school district, to the school designated for matriculation in that school district.

Best Interest: In making educational and school placement decisions for a foster youth, consideration is given to, among other factors, the proximity to the school at the time of placement, appropriateness of the educational setting, educational stability, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress, and the foster youth's access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all VCOE students.

VCOE FOSTER YOUTH SERVICES LIAISON

The Superintendent designates the following position as the County's liaison for foster youth:

Laura Welbourn
Foster Youth Services Coordinator
5189 Verdugo Way
Camarillo, CA 93012
(805) 437-1525
fys@vcoe.org

The VCOE liaison for foster youth shall:

1. Ensure and facilitate the proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school of students in foster care
2. Ensure proper transfer of credits, records, and grades when students in foster care transfer from one school to another or from one district to another

When a student in foster care is enrolling in a VCOE school, the liaison or designee shall contact the school last attended by the student to obtain, within two business days, all academic and other records. When a foster youth is transferring to a new school, the liaison shall provide the student's records to the new school within two business days of receiving the new school's request

3. When required by law, notify the foster youth's attorney and the representative of the appropriate county child welfare agency when the foster youth is undergoing any expulsion or other disciplinary proceeding, including a manifestation determination prior to a change in the foster youth's placement when he/she is a student with a disability

4. As needed, make appropriate referrals to ensure that students in foster care receive necessary special education services and services under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973
5. As needed, ensure that students in foster care receive appropriate school-based services, such as counseling and health services, supplemental instruction, and after-school services
6. Develop protocols and procedures for creating awareness for VCOE staff, including principals, school registrars, and attendance clerks, of the requirements for the proper enrollment, placement, and transfer of foster youth
7. Collaborate with the county office of education, county placing agency, county child welfare agency, county probation department, juvenile court, and other appropriate agencies to help coordinate services for VCOE's foster youth
8. Monitor the educational progress of foster youth and provide reports to the Ventura County Board of Education and County Superintendent based on indicators identified in the VCOE's local control and accountability plan

The Superintendent or designee shall regularly monitor the caseload of the liaison, as well as his/her additional duties outside of the foster youth program, to determine whether adequate time and resources are available to meet the needs of foster youth in Ventura County.

ENROLLMENT

A student placed in a licensed children's institution or foster family home within the district shall attend programs operated by the district unless one of the following circumstances applies:

1. The student has an individualized education program requiring placement in a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency, or in another local educational agency.
2. The parent/guardian or other person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student determines that it is in the best interest of the student to be placed in another educational program and submits a written statement to the district indicating that determination and that he/she is aware of the following:
 - a. The student has a right to attend a regular public school in the least restrictive environment.
 - b. The alternate educational program is a special education program, if applicable.
 - c. The decision to unilaterally remove the student from the district school and to place him/her in an alternate education program may not be financed by the district.

- d. Any attempt to seek reimbursement for the alternate education program may be at the expense of the parent/guardian or other person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student.
- 3. At the initial placement or any subsequent change in placement, the student exercises his/her right to continue in his/her school of origin, as defined above.
 - a. The student may continue in the school of origin for the duration of the court's jurisdiction.
 - b. If the court's jurisdiction over a grade K-8 student is terminated prior to the end of a school year, the student may continue in his/her school of origin for the remainder of the school year.
 - c. If the court's jurisdiction is terminated while the student is in high school, the student may continue in his/her school of origin until he/she graduates.
 - d. If the student is transitioning between school grade levels, he/she shall be allowed to continue in the district of origin in the same attendance area to provide him/her the benefit of matriculating with his/her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns of school districts. A student who is transitioning to a middle school or high school shall be allowed to enroll in the school designated for matriculation in another school district.

The VCOE liaison may, in consultation with and with the agreement of the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the youth, recommend that the youth's right to attend the school of origin be waived and he/she be enrolled in any school that students living in the attendance area in which the foster youth resides are eligible to attend. All decisions shall be made in accordance with the foster youth's best interests.

Prior to making any recommendation to move a foster youth from his/her school of origin, the liaison shall provide the youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the youth with a written explanation of the basis for the recommendation and how the recommendation serves the youth's best interests.

The role of the liaison shall be advisory with respect to placement decisions and determination of the school of origin.

If the liaison, in consultation with the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth, agrees that the best interests of the youth would be served by his/her transfer to a school other than the school of origin, the principal or designee of the new school shall immediately enroll the foster youth. The foster youth shall be immediately enrolled even if he/she:

1. Has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks, or other items or monies due to the school last attended
2. Does not have clothing normally required by the school, such as school uniforms
3. Is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, proof of residency, and medical records, including, but not limited to, immunization records or other documentation

If the foster youth or a person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster youth disagrees with the liaison's enrollment recommendation, he/she may appeal to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall make a determination within 30 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Superintendent's decision, the parent/guardian or foster youth may appeal that decision to the Board. The Board shall consider the issue at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Board's decision shall be final.

If any dispute arises regarding the request of a foster youth to remain in the school of origin, the youth has the right to remain in the school of origin pending resolution of the dispute.

TRANSPORTATION

The Superintendent or designee shall collaborate with the local child welfare agency to determine how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded in a cost-effective manner to enable foster youth to remain in their school of origin, for the duration of their time in foster care, when it is in their best interest to do so. Such transportation costs may be paid by either the child welfare agency or VCOE or shared by both.

EFFECT OF ABSENCES ON GRADES

The grades of a student in foster care shall not be lowered for any absence from school that is due to either of the following circumstances:

1. A decision by a court or placement agency to change the student's placement, in which case the student's grades shall be calculated as of the date he/she left school
2. A verified court appearance or related court-ordered activity

TRANSFER OF COURSEWORK AND CREDITS

When a foster youth transfers into a VCOE school, VCOE shall accept and issue full credit for any coursework that the foster youth has satisfactorily completed while attending another public school, a juvenile court school, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency and shall not require the foster youth to retake the course.

If the foster youth did not complete the entire course, he/she shall be issued partial credit for the coursework completed and shall be required to take the portion of the course that he/she did not complete at his/her previous school. However, VCOE may require the foster youth to retake the portion of the course completed if, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the foster youth, VCOE finds that the foster youth is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. Whenever partial credit is issued to a foster youth in any particular course, he/she shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that he/she may continue and complete the entire course.

Partial credits shall be awarded on the basis of 0.5 credits for every seven class periods attended per subject. If the school is on a block schedule, each block schedule class period attended shall be equal to two regular class periods per subject. Partial credits and grades earned by a student shall be included on the student's official transcript within two business days of VCOE's notification of the student's transfer, as required under Education Code 49069.5.

In no event shall VCOE prevent a foster youth from taking or retaking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University or the University of California.

APPLICABILITY OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To obtain a high school diploma, a foster youth shall complete all courses required by Education Code 51225.3 and fulfill any additional graduation requirements prescribed by the Board. However, when a foster youth who has completed his/her second year of high school transfers into VCOE from another school district or transfers between high schools within VCOE, he/she shall be exempted from all VCOE-adopted coursework and other VCOE-established graduation requirements, unless VCOE makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of his/her fourth year of high school. Within 30 calendar days of the foster youth's transfer, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the foster youth, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her, and the foster youth's social worker of the availability of the exemption and whether the foster youth qualifies for it. If the Superintendent or designee fails to provide this notification, the student shall be eligible for the exemption once notified, even if the notification occurs after the student is no longer a foster youth.

To determine whether a foster youth is in his/her third or fourth year of high school, VCOE shall use either the number of credits the foster youth has earned as of the date of the transfer or the length of his/her school enrollment, whichever qualifies him/her for the exemption.

The Superintendent or designee shall notify any foster youth who is granted an exemption and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her how any requirements that are waived will affect the foster youth's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

VCOE shall not require or request a foster youth to transfer schools in order to qualify for an exemption and no request for a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption shall be made by a foster youth or any person acting on behalf of a foster youth.

If a foster youth is exempted from local graduation requirements, the exemption shall continue to apply after the termination of the court's jurisdiction over the student while he/she is still enrolled in school or if he/she transfers to another school or school district.

Upon making a finding that a foster youth is reasonably able to complete VCOE graduation requirements within his/her fifth year of high school, the Superintendent or designee shall:

1. Inform the foster youth and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her of the foster youth's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete VCOE's graduation requirements and how that will affect his/her ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution
2. Provide information to the foster youth about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges
3. Upon agreement with the foster youth or, if he/she is under 18 years of age, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her, permit the foster youth to stay in school for a fifth year to complete VCOE's graduation requirements

ELIGIBILITY FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A foster youth whose residence changes pursuant to a court order or decision of a child welfare worker shall be immediately deemed to meet all residency requirements for participation in interscholastic sports or other extracurricular activities.

NOTIFICATION AND COMPLAINTS

Information regarding the educational rights of foster youth shall be included in the annual uniform complaint procedures notification distributed to students, parents/guardians, employees, and other interested parties pursuant to 5 CCR 4622.

Any complaint alleging that VCOE has not complied with requirements regarding the education of foster youth may be filed in accordance with VCOE's procedures in AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures. If the County finds merit in a complaint, the County shall provide a remedy to the affected student. A complainant not satisfied with VCOE's decision may appeal the decision to the California Department of Education (CDE) and shall receive a written decision regarding the appeal within 60 days of CDE's receipt of the appeal. If the CDE finds merit in an appeal, VCOE shall provide a remedy to the affected student.