

December 1, 2016

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Attention: CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM MANAGERS AND CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

SUBJECT: EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

In December 2015, Congress passed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) which reauthorized the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) and complements the 2008 *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act*. The provisions in ESSA, which take effect on December 10, 2016, require state and local educational agencies to work with child welfare agencies to ensure the educational stability of children in foster care.

Educational stability is achieved when a foster child is able to continue his or her education without disruption, be able to maintain important relationships, and to have the opportunity to achieve college and career readiness. Child welfare agencies and education agencies are to coordinate efforts to improve educational stability and outcomes for children in foster care in four primary areas:

1. School enrollment; decisions for placement and enrollment of students must be completed in a timely manner;
2. School stability; each placement of the child considers the appropriateness and proximity of the current placement to the previous educational setting, coordination with the local education agency to ensure that the child can remain in that previous school; or if remaining in that school is not in the best interests of the child, an assurance to enroll the child immediately in a new school with all educational records provided;
3. School transportation; costs of travel to school allowed as part of foster care maintenance payments; and,
4. Development of a transition plan; a plan for educational stability is in the case plan for each child in foster care.

To assist local educational agencies (LEAs) and child welfare agencies in addressing the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act, a webinar entitled "Educational Stability for NC Children in Foster Care" has been scheduled for December 9th, at 10:00 a.m. Representatives from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), and the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro will provide an overview of the NCDHHS/NCDPI joint protocol on ensuring educational stability for children in foster care. Presenters will highlight next steps for collaboration and implementation, and provide time for questions/answers during this one-hour session. To register for this webinar please use the following link: [Educational Stability for NC Children in Foster Care](#).



The Division is finalizing the policy and forms for child welfare agency compliance with ESSA. In order to facilitate communication and collaboration between the Division and counties, and between counties, regarding implementation and ongoing compliance with ESSA, please complete the following survey one time on behalf of your county agency by December 9th, 2016.

<https://www.ncsurveymax.com/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=84K25914>

In the meantime, if you have questions or need clarification please contact Natalie Bacon (Natalie.Bacon@dhhs.nc.gov) at 828-669-3388 or Linda Clements (Linda.Clements@dhhs.nc.gov) at 919-527-6341.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "K" and a long, trailing "y".

Kevin Kelley, Section Chief
Child Welfare Services