



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

COMMISSIONER
John J. Specia, Jr.

August 1, 2014

Dear Caregivers;

Getting Ready for the New School Year

The new school year is quickly approaching. You, as the caregiver, can help the students in your care meet his or her educational needs and achieve his or her educational goals by ensuring children are registered and enrolled prior to the beginning date of school. Call the local school district to find out what school your child is attending according to your address and school zoning plan.

1. **Prompt School Enrollment - Students returning to a school in the same school district will need the following documents for school enrollment:**
 - ✓ **Placement Authorization Form 2085 (2085FC, 2085 HCSI, 2085LILi, 2085KFi)**
The Placement Authorization Form 2085 is accepted by school districts as verification that the child or youth is in the conservatorship of DFPS. The form also directs the school district to immediately enroll the student in the National School Lunch Program, and states the DFPS policy on prohibiting the use of physical discipline on a child in DFPS conservatorship. This form must be filed with the school district at the beginning of every school year and at each subsequent school placement.
 - ✓ **Education Decision-Maker Form 2085E**
The Education Decision-Maker form names the education decision-maker for each student in DFPS conservatorship, grades Pre-kindergarten - 12. The Education Decision-Maker is responsible for making education-related decisions, such as granting permission for the student to attend a school event, participating in teacher conferences, and assisting the student in selecting coursework. The Education Decision-Maker Form has contact information about whom school staff should contact on a student's school-related issues. Form 2085E also lists the roles and responsibilities of the Education Decision-Maker, the caseworker, and the school.

A Surrogate Parent will be appointed by the school or court for children and youth receiving special education services. The Surrogate Parent makes special

education-related decisions for the child or youth. The caseworker will complete this section when the Surrogate Parent is named.

Students enrolling in the school district for the first time will need the following documents for school enrollment:

- ✓ Placement Authorization Form 2085 ((2085FC, 2085 HCSI, 2085LILi, 2085KFi)
- ✓ Education Decision-Maker Form 2085E
- ✓ Copy of the student's birth certificate
- ✓ Immunization record
- ✓ School transcripts from previous school student attended, including special education and Section 504 documents
- ✓ Withdrawal Form from the previous school, if applicable and available

All documents for new students must be submitted to the school within 30 days of student enrollment.

- Make sure the child is prepared to learn. School supply lists can be found on the school website, as well as retail stores such as Target, Wal-Mart, CVS and Walgreens.

2. School Attendance

Once student enrollment is completed, the next challenge is maintaining school attendance. Students improve learning outcomes through regular class attendance. Please schedule student appointments outside of school hours. If you must schedule an appointment during the school day, make sure the student is not missing the same academic class each time. Ensure the student makes up the missed work and you have provided the school with a note for an excused absence.

Schools may not give a student course credit or promote the student to the next grade if the student has not maintained 90% school attendance.

3. Monitor Student Academic Progress

As soon as you suspect the student is having difficulty in school, work with the student, his teacher, and Education Decision-Maker to address the issues. Schools offer many academic strategies and supports such as tutoring, credit recovery, Communities in School programs, and Response to Intervention (RTI) to support the student's educational needs. Many schools also provide opportunities for high school students to complete dual credit college classes and online courses.

4. Encourage students to participate in school and community activities.

Students in your care should be encouraged to participate in intramural and University Interscholastic League (UIL) activities such as sports, music, or other fine art programs. Extracurricular activities and school clubs offer opportunities for students to engage in activities with their peer group, develop new talents, and improve social skills. Students may be interested in joining the Girl Scouts or participating in the programs offered by the local YMCA or community worship center.

5. Maintain the student's Education Portfolio.

The Education Portfolio serves several important purposes for a child in conservatorship. The Education Portfolio is a compilation of a child's school records and is intended to follow the child to his or her foster home placement, including staying with the child if and when the child changes foster home or school placements. It serves as a valuable resource for tracking appropriate educational and ancillary services, assessments, report cards, and transcripts.

All children age three and older attending any kind of school-based program must have an Education Portfolio, including:

- Children, ages 3, 4, and 5 attending pre-kindergarten classes at local public schools, through Early Head Start or Head Start, or a Pre-school Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) offered through local public schools;
- Children in grades K – 12 attending Texas public schools, including charter schools, and private schools accredited by the Texas Private Schools Accreditation Commission; and
- Children participating in an approved alternative education setting, such as a juvenile justice facility, home schooling, or homebound setting.

Contact the child's caseworker if the Education Portfolio was not presented to you at the time of placement. When you receive education-related information, please retain a copy for the Education Portfolio and send a copy to the student's caseworker.

6. Refer to resources for education-related issues.

Every school district has named a School District Foster Care Liaison to facilitate the school enrollment process for children and youth in foster care. The School District Foster Care Liaison is also responsible for assisting the caseworker and caregiver in securing necessary school transcripts from the school the student previously attended no later than the 10th working day after the date the student begins enrollment.

See <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/FosterCareStudentSuccess/liaisons/> for your school district's Foster Care Liaison.

Each DFPS region has at least one Education Specialist. The regional Education Specialist provides assistance to school staff, caseworkers, and caregivers to ensure the children in DFPS conservatorship receive appropriate educational and ancillary services to meet the child's educational needs and goals.

See http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147512296&menu_id=2147483761 for DFPS Regional Education Specialists.

Thank you for providing the quality care and additional resources children need to become healthy adults. Have a great school year!