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Foster Care Rights & Resources

Understanding Your Rights

Students in foster care have specific rights under federal and state laws to ensure they receive a stable and supportive educational experience. These rights are designed to address the unique challenges they face and to provide them with equal access to educational opportunities. Here are the key rights for students in foster care:

- 1. Immediate Enrollment:** Students in foster care have the right to be immediately enrolled in school, even if they lack the normally required documents, such as school records, immunization records, proof of residency, or birth certificates.
- 2. School Stability:** Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), foster care students have the right to remain in their school of origin (the school they were attending when placed in foster care or moved to a new foster care placement) if it is in their best interest. Transportation should be provided to facilitate this stability.
- 3. Transportation:** Schools and child welfare agencies must collaborate to provide transportation to the school of origin when needed, ensuring that foster care students can remain in a stable educational environment.
- 4. Equal Access to Education:** Foster care students have the right to attend school and participate fully in all school activities and programs, including extracurricular activities, sports, and after-school programs, without discrimination or stigma.
- 5. Free School Meals:** Foster care students are automatically eligible for free school meals without having to complete a separate application. Schools must facilitate access to these benefits. **Please note, as a virtual school, we are not able to provide this service.**
- 6. Educational Decision-Makers:** When a student is in foster care, a specific person (often a foster parent, caseworker, or appointed surrogate) may be designated to make educational decisions on their behalf, ensuring their needs and preferences are represented.
- 7. Privacy:** Schools must maintain the confidentiality of a foster care student's status and records. Information should only be shared as required by law or for the student's educational benefit.
- 8. Credit Transfer and Recovery:** Foster care students have the right to have their credits transferred and recognized by new schools when they change schools due to placement changes. Schools are also encouraged to offer opportunities for credit recovery to prevent students from falling behind.

Resources

Educational Support

- **School Liaisons:** Each school district has a designated McKinney-Vento liaison to help you navigate the educational system and access resources.
- **Tutoring and Academic Support:** Many schools offer tutoring and other academic support services to help your child succeed.
- **College Education/Post High School Planning**



- Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood: provides funding to support youth/ young adults in or formerly in foster care in their transition to adulthood [CLICK HERE](#)
- Department of Education: resources for youth in foster care [CLICK HERE](#)
- Education and Training Voucher (ETV): Provides \$5,000 to youth who are living independently or have aged out of foster care. [CLICK HERE](#)
- Federal Student Aid: Foster students are not required to provide parental income information, which may qualify them for Pell Grant, Work Study Programs, and Federal Student Loans. [CLICK HERE](#)
- **Internet Support**
 - Cox Connect: Student Internet service for \$9.99/month [CLICK HERE](#)
 - Lifeline Support: Internet connection and phone service at reduced rates for eligible families [CLICK HERE](#)
 - Xfinity Internet: Internet for \$10/month [CLICK HERE](#)
 - PC's for People: Internet for \$15/month [CLICK HERE](#)
 - IDVA Internet Subsidy Program- This application opens in October, and it provides a \$30/month reimbursement to eligible families. Link to the 24-25 form is here: <https://forms.gle/HyEWWpQLrkCNhGJgZ>
- **School Supplies**
 - [Empowering Parents Grant](#)- Provides funds to parents to help support school supplies
- **Clothing**
 - **The Essentials Project:** care packages containing clothing, toiletries, pajamas, and other crucial items to children when they first enter foster care. Call (208) 204-0230. Visit fosterandheart.org.
 - **Parker's Closet:** new clothes, shoes, pajamas, coats, undergarments, art & school supplies, backpacks, and hygiene products. For more information, email parkerscloset@freedom-youth.org.
 - **The Closet** is a non-profit organization that provides free clothing and shoes to teens. (This is only for foster teens, in grades 6-12 who reside in Ada County) For more information, visit <https://www.theclosetinc.org/> or call (208) 409-0204.
 - **The Wardrobe** serves youth in foster care and kinship care. They provide children and youth up to 21 with quality clothing, winter coats, backpacks, hygiene products, hair accessories, and more. Pick up is in Meridian. Email WardrobeTreasureValley@gmail.com, call/text (208) 352-6565, or visit <https://www.wardrobetreasurevalley.org/>.
 - **Formals for Teens** - Any teen in Idaho foster care who needs a formal can choose from numerous formals on the website. If you find one you like, call 208-681-5714 and it will be shipped directly to you. <https://idfapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/formals-half-page-1.pdf>
 - **The Village** is a foster care closet serving the 16 counties of Southeastern Idaho and operated by the Idaho Foster & Adoptive Parent Association. They collect essential care and comfort items for newborns up to teenagers and invite CASA workers,



social workers, and foster families to bring foster children into the store to choose what they need and want free of charge. For more information, visit <https://idfapa.org/the-village/>

- **Clothes Helpers** is a nonprofit organization in Twin Falls, Idaho. They are located at the Historic United Methodist Church, 350 Shoshone Ave East, but they are not affiliated with any religion. Their mission is to provide clothes and hygiene items with compassion and dignity to at-risk members of our community. They offer individualized shopping experiences for foster parents and their youth. When you receive a new placement, season change, or growth spurt, contact Emma Swensen at 208-731-2211 to set up the personalized experience.

Health and Nutrition

- **Free School Meals:** Your child is automatically eligible for free school meals.
- **Health Services:** Schools can help connect you with health services, including immunizations and physical exams.
- **Therapies/Medial Assistance:** All students enrolled in foster care are entitled to the following
 - Medicaid Application [CLICK HERE](#)
 - Behavioral Health Services [CLICK HERE](#)
- **Food Banks and Pantries:** Access to food resources to ensure your family has enough to eat.
 - Department of Health & Welfare: Click here for [SNAP](#) and [WIC](#) information
 - Temporary Assistance for Families (TAFI) [CLICK HERE](#)
 - [Idaho Foodbank Food Assistance Locator](#) [CLICK HERE](#)
 - [Feed America](#) [CLICK HERE](#)
- **Fun & Fitness**
 - **Silverwood Theme Park** provides discounts for your foster child - (silverwoodthemepark.com)
 - **Boise Parks and Rec** Scholarship - Every child in foster care has access to a scholarship fund up to \$600 each for Boise Parks and Recreation activities, classes, sports, swimming passes, and camps on this link: <http://parks.cityofboise.org/activities,-classes-and-sports/>
 - **Cake4Kids** - We're excited to provide homemade, custom cakes and treats for youth ages 1-24, who are celebrating birthdays, graduations, academic awards, adoptions, reunification, and other life events. Cakes must be picked up in Boise or Caldwell but are available to any youth in the state. Ask your caseworker for a referral!
 - **YMCA:** Foster youth get a free membership at the **YMCA**. Foster parents can go into the YMCA and staff will get everyone set up. Foster parents do not get free memberships but can apply for a personal pricing plan, if that is necessary. Once a youth is signed up for a membership they can sign up and participate any other activities for free, such as swimming lesson, basketball, soccer, camps, etc.



- **Boise Bicycle Project** believes every kid should have a bike. They provide over 1000 bikes to kids and teens (4-18) from across the Treasure Valley, Fort Hall Reservation & Duck Valley Reservation each year. For more information, visit: <https://www.boisebicycleproject.org/>.
- An **Idaho State Parks Pass** is available for free for all foster families in Idaho. Pass are mailed yearly, so look for your new pass to arrive in December. Contact your licensing worker with questions.
- **Santa's Cause** provides scholarships for foster kids in Region 5. They fund any special need such as dental care not covered by Medicaid or school extracurricular activities. For more info, visit <https://www.santascauseinc.org>

Financial Assistance

- **Adoption tax credit:** You may be able to take a tax credit for qualifying expenses paid to adopt an eligible child, including a child with special needs. The adoption credit is an amount subtracted from your tax liability. Learn more through the **IRS website**.
- **Employer benefits:** A number of employers offer adoption benefits. Contact your human resources department to inquire about the availability of adoption benefits.
- **Military benefits:** The military provides active-duty personnel a reimbursement for most one-time adoption costs. The **National Military Family Association** provides more information.
- **Loans and grants:** Loans or grants are available through a variety of organizations such as adoption agencies, foundations and banks.
- **Childcare Assistance**
 - Idaho Child Care Program [CLICK HERE](#)
- **Foster Youth to Independence Initiative:** Housing assistance to students aging out of foster care. [CLICK HERE](#)

Resources

- **Child Welfare Information Gateway:** provides comprehensive lists of state and federal resources along with articles relevant for foster parents [CLICK HERE](#)
- **National Foster Parent Association:** [CLICK HERE](#)

How to Get Help

If you need immediate assistance or have questions about your rights contact your school district's Foster Care liaison.