

FOSTER CARE

Foster Care

Foster care is meant to be temporary until a permanent living arrangement is found and CPS no longer has legal custody of the child. However, for some children, it can become permanent. CPS strives to ensure quality services for children in foster care. However, children in foster care may have to change placements several times while in foster care due to a variety of factors, such as licensing standards violations, court rulings, or changes in the foster home or facility. CPS consistently works towards increasing placement options to better match the needs of each individual child.

In Texas, CPS and the Texas Education Code use the term “substitute care” to refer to all children who are in the legal custody of CPS, including children who are placed either with a relative or in a licensed foster placement. “Conservatorship” is a term also used in the Texas Education Code and by CPS to describe the status of a youth who is placed in DFPS legal custody by a court order. Although not as commonly referenced, “substitute care” is interchangeable with the term “conservatorship.”

School stability is a necessary component to improving the education outcomes and education experience for students in foster care. Research highlights the link between school stability and improved graduation rates. According to Casey Family Program’s National Alumni Study, youth who had one fewer placement change per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care. It is widely recognized that school mobility contributes to negative education outcomes and has adverse effects on students generally.

Education provisions in Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 include:

- Emphasis on the importance of school stability, maintaining the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement, and the need for coordination between state and regional child welfare and state and local education agencies.
- Assurance that the placements take into account the appropriateness of the current education setting and proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care.
- If remaining in the same school is not in the child’s best interest, the child welfare and local education agencies will work together to ensure immediate and appropriate enrollment and provide ALL of the child’s education records to the new school.