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H.B. 25
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

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Version: As Passed by the House

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Jarrells and Ray

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SUMMARY

- Requires the Director of Education and Workforce, in collaboration with specified other state agency leaders, to encourage the sharing of best practices to support students placed in foster care.
- Requires each public school to designate a local foster care education liaison to support students in foster care.
- Requires each public school, for each school building it operates, to designate a building staff member as the foster family navigator to serve as the primary point of contact to support students placed in foster care that attend that school.
- Requires the Department of Education and Workforce to develop and administer an annual training for the local foster care education liaisons and foster family navigators.
- Requires public children's services agencies (PCSAs) or private child placing agencies (PCPAs) to provide independent living services to each youth in the custody of the PCSA or PCPA.
- Requires the PCSA or PCPA to conduct a life skills assessment to determine which independent living services are applicable or not needed, and to provide a copy of the life skills assessment to the student's foster family navigator upon request.
- Entitles the bill the "Fostering School Success Act."

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Fostering School Success Act

The bill, entitled the "Fostering School Success Act," requires the Director of Education and Workforce, in collaboration with the Chancellor of Higher Education, Director of Children and Youth, and Director of Job and Family Services, to encourage the sharing of best practices to

support students placed in foster care. They must post resources to their agency's publicly available website to assist local foster care education liaisons, foster family navigators, and public children services agencies (PCSAs) in supporting students placed in foster care.

Under the bill, the Chancellor also must post to the Chancellor's website any scholarship opportunities specifically for students placed in foster care that are available at each state institution of higher education.

Additionally, the Department of Education and Workforce must support local foster care education liaisons and foster family navigators established under the bill.¹

Local foster care education liaisons

The bill requires each school district, community school, and STEM school to designate a local foster care education liaison to support the identification, enrollment, and access to academic and nonacademic resources for each of their students who are placed in foster care. The bill requires each district or school to post contact information for its local foster care education liaison on its publicly available website.

Under the bill, a local foster care education liaison must:

1. Coordinate with the local custodial agency point of contact;
2. Create, maintain, and properly document local processes and procedures for best interest determinations that are inclusive of students placed in foster care;
3. Ensure proper identification of students placed in foster care in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) based on a change in placement for the student;
4. Facilitate records transfer and immediate enrollment and data sharing;
5. Develop and coordinate local transportation procedures;
6. Manage disputes related to best interest determination and transportation cost;
7. Provide professional development for school personnel to help identify, support, and engage students placed in foster care;
8. Respond to a request from a PCSA or private child placing agencies (PCPA) for input from a district or school concerning the determination of whether it is in the best interest of the student placed in foster care to remain in the school of origin;
9. Collaborate with the PCSA or PCPA to ensure that any necessary transportation and services are provided for the student placed in foster care to remain in the student's school of origin;
10. If a PCSA or PCPA determines that it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, work with the agency, juvenile probation officer, parents, guardian ad litem or counsel for the student, and foster caregivers to ensure that the student is

¹ R.C. 3301.96 and Section 3.

enrolled in a new school immediately with transition planning, and that the student's complete education information and records are requested immediately by the student's new school upon enrollment;

11. Upon receiving the required notification and invitation, participate in a transition planning meeting regarding the enrollment in a public school of a student placed in foster care from a state-licensed day treatment facility or hospital, or having a designee participate in the meeting; and
12. Participate, or have the local foster care education liaison's designee participate, in any interagency collaboration team or threat assessment team centered on students placed in foster care, which the school district or school may develop or on which the school district or school may be invited to participate.²

Foster family navigators

The bill requires each school district, community school, and STEM school, for each school building it operates, to designate a building staff member as the foster family navigator as the primary point of contact for that building to support students placed in foster care attending that building. Under the bill, each district or school must post contact information for each of its building's foster family navigators on its publicly available website.

The bill requires each foster family navigator to do the following:

1. Collaborate with the family of each student placed in foster care that is attending the school;
2. Provide support to students placed in foster care, including by requesting and obtaining a copy of the student's life skills assessment from the PCSA or PCPA for planning and service provision;
3. Provide access to academic and nonacademic services to students placed in foster care;
4. Engage with each student placed in foster care that is attending the school at least one time per semester;
5. Support the full engagement and participation in school activities for all students placed in foster care in accordance with continuing law;
6. For students in grades 9-12, identify resources available to students placed in foster care for attending college, including:
 - a. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
 - b. Federal Pell grant;
 - c. Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity grant;
 - d. Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program grant;

² R.C. 3313.475(B), 3314.03, and 3326.11.

- e. Ohio College Opportunity grant;
 - f. Any extended foster care benefits;
 - g. Any grant or scholarship opportunity that is specific to an institution of higher education;
 - h. Any private sources of scholarship or grant opportunities; and
 - i. Any other state and federal grants that may be available to the student.
7. For students in grades 9-12, help students placed in foster care make a plan to attend college, enter a career training program, or enter the workforce; and
 8. Identify resources to help a student placed in foster care successfully complete high school graduation requirements.³

The bill permits a community school or STEM school that only operates one building to designate the same individual to fulfil the duties of both the foster family navigator and the local foster care education liaison.⁴

The bill requires the Department of Education and Workforce, within six months of the bill's effective date, to collaborate with the departments of Children and Youth, Higher Education, and Job and Family Services to develop training for the foster family navigators and local foster care education liaisons, and requires the Department of Workforce and Education to be responsible for the posting and administration of the training. The bill requires each foster family navigator and local foster care education liaison to complete this training at least once per year.⁵

Independent living services

The bill codifies an existing administrative rule that requires a PCSA or PCPA to provide developmentally appropriate independent living services to each youth in the custody of the PCSA or PCPA to prepare the youth for the transition to self-sufficiency. The bill also codifies the requirement for the PCSA or PCPA to conduct a life skills assessment to determine which independent living services are applicable for the student, which may include:

1. Academic support;
2. Post-secondary educational support;
3. Career preparation;
4. Employment programs or vocational training;
5. Budget and financial management;

³ R.C. 3313.475(C)(1) and (2), 3314.03, and 3326.11.

⁴ R.C. 3313.475(C)(3).

⁵ R.C. 3313.475(D).

6. Housing, education, and home management training;
7. Health education and risk prevention;
8. Family support and healthy relationship and marriage education;
9. Mentoring;
10. Supervision services for a youth placed in a supervised independent living arrangement;
11. Room and board financial assistance for rent, deposits, utilities, and other household start-up expenses; and
12. Financial assistance, including direct cash assistance or other payments made or provided by the county agency to help the youth gain independence.

Under the bill, the PCSA or PCPA serving a youth in the custody of the agency, upon the request of a foster family navigator, must provide the foster family navigator with a copy of the youth's life skills assessment.⁶

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	01-27-25
Reported, H. Workforce and Higher Education	02-18-26
Passed House (93-2)	03-04-26

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⁶ R.C. 5103.62 and 3313.475(C)(1)(b); see also Ohio Administrative Code 5180:2-42-19(E).