

# ACTION STEPS FOR ALLIES OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING FOSTER CARE

## Guidance

### IMPROVING & SUPPORTING SCHOOL STABILITY

**Listen to Students:** Always prioritize student input in discussions about their education, and let them take the lead when possible. This empowers them to collaborate and succeed.

**Focus on Strengths:** Talk about students' strengths and passions before addressing areas for improvement. Support both their academic and extracurricular interests.

**Explore All Transportation Options:** Consider all possible transportation solutions by involving the community and family, which can strengthen relationships and improve stability.

**Follow-Up Regularly:** After decisions are made about school placement, check in with students to track progress, address needs, and celebrate successes.

**Communication:** Emails work great to ensure everyone from the school, placement, DCS, outside providers, and stakeholders are working together in support of the youth.

### IDENTIFYING THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

**Know Student Rights:** Understand the basics of a student's special education needs to ensure students receive the services they require.

**Ask Questions:** Don't be afraid to ask questions—this helps everyone understand the process and supports student self-advocacy.

**Consider the Environment:** Make sure the student's educational setting meets their needs, whether it's an inclusion or self-contained classroom, special support periods, etc.

**Stay Organized:** Keep track of important deadlines, meetings, and maintain an organized folder with relevant information.

**Reach Out for Help:** Use available resources that can help you advocate effectively for the student's special education needs.

## ■ CREATING THE RIGHT SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### **Engage with the Student:**

Understand the student's other responsibilities (e.g., work, family) and find a school environment that suits their needs, like online classes or alternative schedules.

**Don't Wait for Problems:** Address school challenges early, such as finding the right class difficulty, or requesting extra help or a special education evaluation.

**Empower the Student:** Encourage students to take responsibility for their education by reaching out to teachers and counselors for support, practice this with them until they feel ready.

**Create a Behavior Plan:** Be proactive about behavioral issues. Work with the team to ensure discipline supports growth, and make sure communication about behavioral issues is clear.

## ■ GRADUATING & SUCCESS

**Start Early:** Begin discussing future goals as early as middle school, and monitor progress through high school to keep students on track.

**Monitor Grades:** Stay on top of grades and assignments throughout the semester, not just at the end. Address issues early to set students up for success.

**Set Clear Goals:** Be specific when setting future goals (e.g., college aspirations) so students can track their progress toward those goals.

**Seek Support:** Take advantage of resources available at high schools and colleges to help students with college applications and other support.

**Gradual Responsibility:** Gradually give students more control over their goals and planning to prepare them for the independence needed in college and careers.