

Last week there was an educational stability workgroup meeting to discuss ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) and the impact on school transportation for foster care students. The following are highlights from the meeting:

1. The state plans to allocate the pilot project transportation funds into two school fiscal years: 2017-18 and 2018-19. This means approx. \$475,000 will be available to distribute per year. The state is retaining \$50,000 (5%) of the funding for its own administrative costs, as was allowed in the legislation.
2. The state will publish an ‘application form’ and a ‘financial report’ that will need to be filled-in and submitted to MDE to secure release of any funds...will be due after the end of each school year. MDE is still working to finalize these reports.
3. The application and report, and the flow of funds, will go through local school districts, with a provision that funds get proportionally distributed between schools and counties based on who spent what.
4. State pilot project funds will be distributed on a pro-rated bases up to the amount available through the pilot project funds (not first-come, first served) to qualifying local jurisdictions who incur and report qualifying expenses.
5. Local transportation agreements that meet certain state-specified criteria must be in place between counties and school districts as a condition of any new State funds. The agreements are a federal requirement, regardless of any state funding for the pilot. School districts who do not have such agreements in place may jeopardize their entire Title 1 federal funding stream.
6. There is a hierarchy for determining which students qualify for Pilot Project funding:
  - a. Transportation costs for students who remain within the school district (or school transportation boundaries) of the ‘school of origin’ will remain the fiscal responsibility of the local school district
  - b. Students who have IEPs that include transportation as a required service will be funded through special education by the district responsible for the IEP
  - c. Students in shelter care (‘awaiting foster care’) are funded by the State as if they were covered under McKinney Vento funding (MARSS code #7)
  - d. Students who are homeless prior to foster care placement will be covered under McKinney Vento for the duration of the school year by McKinney Vento
  - e. Transportation costs for all other students in foster care, who are placed in a school located outside the transportation boundary of the students ‘school of origin or current school placement’, and for whom remaining in the school of origin or current school placement is in the student’s best interest, shall be funded by local jurisdictions based on an agreement between the county and school district. These cost can be reimbursed by the Pilot Project, subject to available Project resources.
7. A number of jurisdictions have been reluctant to enter into such agreements, either because of school district reluctance OR county reluctance, or both. DHS and MDE contacts (Helen

Bassett and Beth Chaplin) should be contacted when this occurs and assistance is sought to get things moving.

8. Some jurisdictions have started compiling financial information – Hennepin estimates nearly \$500,000 for the past calendar year (12 months) was spent on qualifying transportation; Rochester maybe \$35,000 TYD for the current school year.
9. Claiming IVE is a challenge when school districts are making the expenditure. Need for continuing work on this issue. (IVE claiming against county spending is not so hard to do.)
10. There is no compilation of the names of the required single-point-of-contact for ESSA/foster care in local school districts or counties. DHS and MDE will work to assemble such a list.
11. DHS is working on a draft Bulletin that will explain the education requirements in ESSA. Not sure of release date, but a draft was circulated at the meeting.
12. MDE does not have a process for issuing bulletins, but there will be some form of communication on this subject forthcoming.
13. The group agreed that it was worth continuing to meet, as it was helpful in the following ways:
  - i. Getting information from the State out to school district and county folks (and information from local communities back to the State)
  - ii. Helping county and local school folks meet up with each other
  - iii. Sharing information about current practices and issues among each other and getting peer support
  - iv. Collecting information to help with convincing the legislature that this funding is needed ongoing
14. Next meeting is tentatively set for April 26 after the MACSSA meeting.

Thanks to Jamie Halpern from Hennepin County for putting this information together!

Best,

*Suzanne*