



**VIRGINIA  
IS FOR  
LEARNERS**

**James F. Lane, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

---

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S EMAIL**

**Contact:** Maggie Clemmons 804-225-4387

DATE: April 15, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUPT'S EMAIL: **[CORRECTION]** Education Stability for Students in Foster Care  
During COVID-19 School Closure

---

*This is being sent as a correction to the Supt's Email of April 13, 2020.  
Please note that the contact email address has been revised  
and the Joint Statement has been updated.*

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) have worked together to issue guidance related to the educational stability of students in foster care during school closures as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

While schools in Virginia are closed in response to COVID-19, students in foster care should remain enrolled in the last school attended and participate in proactive student engagement in learning being offered to other students. In accordance with the [Virginia Code §63.2-900\(D\)](#), VDSS caseworkers will continue to notify foster care liaisons when students in care change residence. To assist with this notification, VDSS and VDOE staff members have created a temporary notification form and process to assist with sharing information that will be needed to conduct Best Interest Determinations (BID) when schools reopen.

The attachments include a joint VDOE and VDSS statement outlining the process and the *COVID-19 Temporary Substitute for Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services and Request for Best Interest Determination Participation Form* that caseworkers are being asked to use while schools remain closed. (The COVID-19 form is a separate Word document attached to the digest with the file name "04-15-20 COVID-19 Temporary Substitute Form.") These documents will also be shared with division foster care liaisons via email.

For questions related to educational stability for students in foster care, please contact Laura Hackett, Assistant State Coordinator, Project HOPE-Virginia by email at [homlss@wm.edu](mailto:homlss@wm.edu), or by phone at (757) 221-4002.

JFL/PRP/rge

The Joint Statement can be found on the following pages.



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### **Joint statement from the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) on educational stability for children and youth in foster care during school closures due to COVID-19**

Educational stability staff from VDOE and VDSS have been meeting to discuss how to implement the mandates for school stability for children and youth in foster care in the current climate. The following recommendations are proposed based on Governor Northam's March 23, 2020 announcement that schools would remain closed through the end of the academic year. Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) and school divisions should keep the following in mind:

1. Per [Virginia Code §63.2-900\(D\)](#), LDSS foster care workers must continue to notify schools of every foster care placement change within 72 hours. If the placement is in a new school division, the foster care liaisons for BOTH the school division in which the student was enrolled prior to the placement change and the school division in which the student is now living should be notified using the “*COVID-19 Temporary Substitute for Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services and Request For Best Interest Determination Participation Form*” (Form A).
2. The Best Interest Determination (BID) requires the participation of school foster care liaisons and important school and student information. Since school staff and records may not be available and school divisions may not be enrolling new students, BIDs cannot be completed during these closures. As with any foster care placement change, students should remain enrolled in their school of origin until the final BID decision can be made. During these unprecedented school closures, students should be allowed to participate in any virtual programming; school divisions are encouraged to coordinate the provision of positive proactive student engagement in learning when distance becomes a barrier to student participation in options made available through their school of origin.
3. The LDSS and school divisions should work collaboratively to schedule and execute the BID as schools reopen. If possible, BIDs should be completed PRIOR to reopening. When not possible, BIDs should take place within three days of reopening. Please note that the request for a BID section of Form A has been updated on the COVID-19 Temporary Substitute form, as BIDs and immediate enrollment will be on hold during school closures. ***Foster care liaisons are encouraged to begin to identify backup staff that can participate in the BID process if an influx of requests is expected when schools reopen to students. The LDSS foster care workers are encouraged to provide student information as quickly as possible during this interim time to assist in expedited BID processes upon schools reopening.***
4. Updated FAQs on general education issues and special education during the COVID-19 response can be found at: [http://doe.virginia.gov/support/health\\_medical/office/covid-19-faq.shtml](http://doe.virginia.gov/support/health_medical/office/covid-19-faq.shtml).
5. As schools reopen, VDSS and VDOE will provide additional guidance.

Your dedication to the education of all children and youth in foster care is always appreciated, especially in these uncertain times, and does not go unnoticed. The VDSS and VDOE staff members plan to

remain available to support the educational stability of all children and youth through supporting the hard work and collaborations of the LDSS and schools. Questions and requests for technical assistance are welcomed and may be directed to:

Virginia Department of Education:

Dr. Patricia Popp, State Coordinator Project HOPE-VA

[pxpopp@wm.edu](mailto:pxpopp@wm.edu)

(757) 221-4002

or

Laura Hackett, Assistant State Coordinator

Project HOPE-VA

[lihackett@wm.edu](mailto:lihackett@wm.edu)

(757) 221-4002

Virginia Department of Social Services:

Aaran Kelley, Youth Services Program Specialist

[aaran.kelley@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:aaran.kelley@dss.virginia.gov)

(804) 726-7944

or

Patrice Jackson, Foster Care Constituent Consultant

[patrice.jackson@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:patrice.jackson@dss.virginia.gov)

(804) 726-7511