



Georgia Department of Human Services
Division of Family and Children Services
Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) Unit

Educational Stability Transportation Funding Request Protocol

Purpose:

Educational Stability is critical and essential to a child's well-being. It is imperative Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) case managers and other direct service staff responsible for case planning engage in the necessary steps to make best interest determination regarding the stability of educational settings for children and youth as they enter and remain in care. Educational stability transportation funds should be used to support the practice of ensuring foster children and youth remain in their home school/school of origin as a part of educational stability. The following protocol has been established to help guide case managers, supervisors, and others through the process when it has been deemed appropriate that financial assistance is required to support transportation services to ensure the educational stability of children and youth. *UAS Program 518 CODES 56d, 56e and 56f - transportation for educational stability* should be used when requesting and documenting transportation cost and mileage for educational stability.

UAS Program 518 CODES for Transportation for Educational Stability:

UAS Program 518 CODE 56d – Public Transportation Services

UAS Program 518 CODE 56e – WRAP Transportation

UAS Program 518 CODE 56f – Education Stability – WRAP Mileage

Practice Guidance and protocol:

All children and youth entering foster care should remain in their home school/school of origin. Often, foster care placements do not result in a change in educational setting however, there are instances when a placement may be located outside the school district that is affiliated with the child/youth's home school/school of origin. When these situations occur, it may be necessary to support the current school placement with transportation services.

- (1) Review the *Educational Stability Field Guide* which supports consistent and best practice in ensuring educational stability.
- (2) Complete the *Educational Stability Checklist* which will assist you in determining the appropriateness of the current educational setting.
- (3) Complete the following checklist to determine if transportation support will be needed:
 - a. Does the child/youth need transportation support to remain in his/her home school/school of origin **(Yes or No)**?
 - i. **No – stop here**
 - ii. **Yes - proceed with protocol**
 - b. Is the caregiver (foster parent or placement provider) willing and/or able and agrees to transport the child/youth to school or an appropriate educational program **(Yes or No)**?
 - i. **Yes - stop here. Foster parent/caregiver will provide transportation.**

ii. **No - proceed with protocol**

Note: Foster parents/caregivers will provide transportation to ensure educational stability for distances of 25 miles or less.

- c. If transportation support is needed based on (a) and (b), the case manager must initiate a service authorization in Georgia SHINES for educational transportation services (*UAS Program 518 CODES 56d, 56e and 56f – transportation for educational stability*). Once the service authorization for *UAS Program 518 CODES 56d, 56e and 56f – transportation for educational stability* is submitted, the service authorization must be reviewed and approved by the Case Manager's supervisor or designee.
- d. All requests for transportation to ensure educational stability are subject to state office qualitative review (this review will not delay initial service authorization requests or the continuity of transportation services that may already be provided within the first 30 days of entering foster care or a change in placement setting). All *UAS Program 518 CODES 56d, 56e and 56f – transportation for educational stability* service authorization requests may not be continued based on the state office qualitative review and other factors outlined in this protocol. Special considerations for transportation during the qualitative review are listed below. These considerations include, but are not limited to:
- i. Youth currently enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade
 - ii. Medically fragile children/youth
 - iii. Enrollments and withdrawals around critical school days (testing days, days before and after major breaks and holidays)

Transportation Considerations:

Case managers should consider the following transportation options when determining the type of transportation to ensure educational stability for the child/youth:

- a. Local transportation options – Are there local transportation options available (**Yes or No**)? See options listed below. These options include, but are not limited to:
- a. Public transportation/Mass Transit
 - b. Van pools
 - c. Taxis
1. **Yes – stop here. Case manager may proceed with service authorization request.**
 2. **No - proceed with protocol**
- b. Wrap transportation services - If foster parent/caregiver and local transportation options are not available, Wrap transportation services should be utilized.

When determining the most appropriate transportation option for the child/youth, the case manager should consider the following determining factors:

- i. Age of child/youth
- ii. Location of placement and distance from school of origin
- iii. Child/youth's physical and cognitive abilities
- iv. Child/youth's developmental abilities

Reasonable Distance Determination:

There may instances where the distance of the child/youth's school of origin is an unreasonable distance and would impede the quality of education provided to the child/youth. This may negatively impact the

child/youth's well-being and create a barrier for academic success. The following considerations should be made when determining if the school of origin is an unreasonable distance from the child/youth's placement:

- i. Does the commute exceed one hour (one-way) or 60 miles in distance (one-way)? **REMINDER: Foster parents/caregivers will provide transportation to ensure educational stability for distances of 25 miles or less.**
- ii. Will the cost of the services exceed \$2,000.00 per month?

Practice Guidance:

To ensure the most appropriate determinations have been made for the child/youth, the following actions should occur:

1. Confirm an EPAC Referral Form has been completed for the child/youth.
2. Notify the child/youth's EPAC Education Support Monitor (ESM) assigned to your region to inform them of the educational transportation service that has been requested.
3. Update the Education Detail Page for the child/youth in SHINES by indicating the child/youth's home school/school of origin.