

SFY 2023 ESSA / Foster Care Transportation Claiming Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please see the [Massachusetts DESE and DCF Joint Guidance - Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care](#) for additional details and definitions about the foster care provisions under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

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School of Origin

What is a “School of Origin”?

The School of Origin is the school in which a child is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. Under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to promote educational stability, a student has the right to continue to attend the school of origin, unless it is determined not to be in the student’s best interest. Absent other agreements between districts and DCF, the district of origin is responsible for providing transportation to and from the school of origin.

For example, if a child lives in and attends a school in Boston Public Schools before they are in foster care and that child is then placed in a foster home in Cambridge, Boston is their district of origin and, absent other agreements between districts and DCF, is responsible for providing transportation for that child from their foster home to school and back to their foster home.

Please see the [Massachusetts DESE and DCF Joint Guidance - Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care](#) for additional details and definitions about the foster care provisions under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Does the School of Origin ever change as a child changes foster care placements?

Yes. If a child’s foster care placement changes, the School of Origin would then be considered the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of the placement change. For example, a student enters foster care and changes residences, meaning that she now lives ten miles away from her School of Origin (school A) and the closest school is school B. If at the time of the child’s foster care placement in the School B district, the child welfare agency and LEA determine that it is in this student’s best interest to attend school B, School B is now considered the School of Origin. One year later, this same student changes foster care placement (and therefore changes residences). She now lives five miles away from the school she is currently enrolled in (school B) and the closest school is school C. For the purposes of determining which school is in this child’s best interest, the child welfare agency and LEA should now consider school B (the school she is currently enrolled in) as the School of Origin¹.

¹ <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf>

Reporting

Where do I submit the MOU and ESSA Supplemental Cost Report?

The MOU and the ESSA Supplemental Cost Report and Attestation must be emailed to ESSAClaiming@pcgus.com.

Are the ESSA transportation costs being reported in the End of Year Report (EOYR) Schedule 7?

Yes. The requirement to report ESSA transportation costs in Schedule 7, Line 4286 in the EOYR, will remain unchanged. In addition, in order to receive Title IV-E reimbursement, ESSA transportation costs will need to be broken down into quarters and reported on a separate ESSA Supplemental Cost Report that can be downloaded from [DESE's website](#)² and must be emailed to ESSAClaiming@pcgus.com by **March 8, 2023**. The report includes both an Excel form and a separate attestation sheet.

Are costs reported in the quarter in which they are incurred or the quarter in which they are paid?

Costs should be reported in the quarter in which they are **paid (date of payment)**.

For example, if transportation is provided in June and paid for by the school in July, those costs should be reported as costs incurred in July.

Since Title IV-E claims are submitted on a cash basis, and the DESE EOYR uses a modified accrual basis, the ESSA Supplemental Cost Report requires LEAs to report the cash payments for each quarter of the current fiscal year in which they are paid (e.g. SFY23), as well as the payments accrued in the previous fiscal year (SFY22), and the payments made in the following fiscal year (SFY24) but accrued in the current fiscal year (SFY23).

Providing this information will help match the totals in the ESSA Supplemental Cost Report to the EOYR ESSA transportation totals, but only the quarterly costs paid during the fiscal year will be claimed to Title IV-E.

What are the requirements for reporting for regional school districts per MGL c.44, § 70?

Requirements for approval for participation for regional school districts are subject to regional school district agreements with cities and towns and should be discussed with the Superintendent if there are concerns. Memorandums of Understanding require the wet signature of an authorized signatory of the LEA, which must be scanned and emailed to ESSAClaiming@pcgus.com.

What are the requirements for reporting for city and town schools?

Pursuant to MGL c. 44, § 70, a city or town, by vote of its town meeting, town council or city council with the approval of the selectmen, town manager or mayor, authorizes the LEA to enter into this MOU for the purposes of Title IV-E reimbursement.

² <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/transportation/>

Upon an agreed vote and approval, Memorandums of Understanding require the signature of an authorized signatory of the LEA. The designation of this individual is at the discretion of the LEA.

If I do not submit my ESSA Supplemental Cost Report before the March 8, 2024 deadline, am I able to report those costs later?

No. SFY23 costs must be reported no later than March 8, 2024.

What should I do if I discover an error in this report or need to file an amendment to the EOYR after submitting this report?

Please email ESSAClaiming@pcgus.com.

Sample Scenarios

If a child was homeless (as defined by the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act) and there is a cost-share agreement in place and that child enters foster care, can the school of origin claim for the cost of transporting that child?

The school of origin can claim the cost of transporting this child if the child is no longer considered homeless and the claiming for homeless transportation has ceased.

A child in foster care has transportation in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), should their transportation costs also be claimed as foster care transportation costs?

No. Only those costs that **are not** claimed to another funding source can be claimed for foster care transportation. For children who are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement because their transportation is in their IEP, they should be claimed **only** as special education transportation.