

# FOSTER CARE TRANSPORTATION

## Reimbursement Request Process Manual

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## CONTENTS

Foster Care Transportation .....	0
Foster Care in Oregon .....	2
Transportation Reimbursement Process .....	2
Student Rights .....	2
Points of Contact .....	3
Update School District or Education Service District Point of Contact .....	3
Communication, Coordination of Supports and School Planning .....	3
Enrollment and School Notification Process .....	3
Transportation Reimbursement .....	4
Types of Foster Care eligible for Reimbursement .....	4
Eligible types of Transportation .....	5
Interagency Collaboration .....	5
Reimbursement Request Process .....	6
Reimbursement Schedule .....	6
Late Submissions .....	6
Technical Assistance .....	7
Booking Page .....	7
Office Hours .....	7
Newsletters .....	7
Personally Identifiable Information (PII) .....	7
Reminders .....	8
Resources: .....	8

## FOSTER CARE IN OREGON

Per the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) of 2015, State educational agencies (SEAs) hold specific responsibilities aimed at supporting the educational rights and opportunities of students in Foster Care; this also falls within requirements established under [Title I, Part A \(Title I\) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 \(ESEA\)](#). These rights include access to immediate enrollment in schools regardless of access to records or additional requirements, free transportation to and from school, access to free meals services, and support engaging in academically and socially enriching activities offered by their school district. These rights include access to immediate enrollment in schools regardless of access to records or additional requirements, free transportation to and from school, access to free meals services, and support engaging in academically and socially enriching activities offered by their school district.

Within this context, Foster Care is defined as substitute care for children placed by the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) or a tribal child welfare agency away from their parents and for whom the department or agency has placement and care responsibility, including placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

### Transportation Reimbursement Process

The transportation reimbursement process is to be used for Foster Care students living outside their school of origin or school district of origin boundaries due to Foster Care placement made by ODHS. [This form](#) is sent to the school district of origin and Foster Care Point of Contact via secure email by the ODHS caseworker. On the Reimbursement Form, the Foster Care Point of Contact logs the days on which the student is transported outside their School District of Origin and submits this reimbursement request to ODE quarterly. The process and forms can be found [in this manual](#).

### Student Rights

Title I-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires State Educational Agencies and Local Education Agencies to support the educational rights and opportunities of students in Child Welfare or Tribal Foster Care. Student rights and services include:

- Remain in their School of Origin
- Immediate Enrollment regardless of access to records or additional requirements
- Records Transfer
- Access to Free Meals
- Free Transportation to and from school
- State and Local Points of Contact to ensure student rights and services are made available.

## Points of Contact

Each school district must also have a designated liaison tasked with overseeing the coordination and application of these supports. This is done through collaboration with caseworkers and other human services representatives, training staff within their district on the unique needs of students in Foster Care, and engaging with community organizations and agencies to ensure that students and families are receiving adequate services under ESSA/ESEA.

At each school district, the designated Foster Care Point of Contact must:

- Collaborate with caseworkers, Resource parents, Tribes, and community partners;
- Train school staff on their role in supporting students in Foster Care; and
- Engage with ODE on matters of professional development and technical assistance.

An updated list of Foster Care Points of Contact by County for each District can be found on the [ODE Foster Care webpage](#).

## Update School District or Education Service District Point of Contact

To update your district's Foster Care Point of Contact or Foster Care Transportation Administrative Contact, please revise the Contacts Section of your district's 2023-2024 CIP Budget Narrative Application. CIP Budget Narratives can be accessed via the [Central Login Application](#) on the [ODE District Website](#). For CIP Budget Narrative permissions please connect with your [District Security Administrator](#) (DSA).

## Communication, Coordination of Supports and School Planning

Good communication between the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and schools is vitally important. It helps our students access federal protections, resources and services to support their well-being and academic success. Schools need to know when students are in ODHS custody and Foster Care, when they are reunified with parents, and when state custody is terminated. This helps schools involve the correct people in planning for students. Schools also need to know how to contact caseworkers in case of emergencies and to include caseworkers in school planning. Every school district has a Foster Care Point of Contact who is responsible for ensuring students' enrollment, helping ODHS caseworkers with questions and setting up [school of origin](#) transportation when necessary. You may want to refer to the [Guideline for Developing Foster Care Transportation Procedures](#).

## Enrollment and School Notification Process

The caseworker (or designated ODHS staff person) should update and send the [School Notification form \(0338\)](#) to the school district Foster Care Point of Contact each school year, or whenever a student experiences a school placement change. The order of operations for this process is outlined in the *School Notification Process* section of the [Technical Assistance Manual](#). It should be noted on the form if

the student is changing schools, and also if a Best Interest Finding has taken place. The School Notification form and the placement form that resource parents give to the school are necessary to enroll the student. If emailing the School Notification form, use the secure email system. ODHS must also send the completed form when the court relieves ODHS of custody and when children are reunified with their parent(s). When case managers have a large group of students they are working with, they can sometimes forget to send the form to the District. We encourage all Foster Care Points of Contact to build relationships with their case managers to ensure they are receiving paperwork in a timely manner. This is also communicated to case workers during their annual training. It is also very important to update school information in the OR-Kids Education Person Management tab. This information is necessary for federal reporting and emergency management. If a student is enrolled in the remote instructional model option through their school/district, the school should still be listed in OR-Kids. Online/remote instructional models through the home school or district differ from home schooling. Clearly identify which model the student is using.

## TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT

Students who live within their school boundaries will continue to receive transportation through their local school district bus routes. The resource parents can set this up with the school. Students receive school of origin transportation when they are placed in Foster Care outside the school district they are attending.

[The ODHS Foster Care Student School Notification form](#) is sent to the school district of origin and Foster Care Point of Contact via secure email by the ODHS caseworker at the beginning of each school year. This service can only be used while the student is in Foster Care or during trial reunification with a parent. ODHS must notify the Foster Care Point of Contact when ODHS is relieved of custody, which removes the transportation service.

If a school district states it lacks resources to transport the student, please notify the ODHS Education Program Coordinator as well as the ODE Foster Care State Coordinator; they will work collaboratively to assist with problem-solving.

### Types of Foster Care eligible for Reimbursement

There are many different types of Foster Care which include:

- Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) Custody
- Oregon Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) Foster Care
- Child Welfare Foster Care
- Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Custody without Placement
- Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Involvement without Custody

## Foster Care Transportation

- Tribal Foster Care

These can be, but are not always, mutually exclusive. **Child Welfare Foster Care is the *only* category eligible for Transportation Reimbursement through the Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement Process explained in this manual.** Legal Guardianship can be confused with ODHS involvement without custody. Please reach out if you have any questions about eligibility to [FosterCare@ode.oregon.gov](mailto:FosterCare@ode.oregon.gov).

### Eligible types of Transportation

Students may be eligible for transportation and other services through multiple programs at the same time. Transportation costs for qualifying students are eligible for reimbursement from the [State School Fund Transportation Grant](#) based on the rates (70%, 80%, and 90%) for the school district of origin. The remaining costs not reimbursed from the State School Fund Transportation Grant (10%, 20%, 30%) are also eligible for reimbursement. Invoices for the remaining balance are submitted to the Department of Education per the department's approved invoice system, where federal matching funds from the Department of Human Services are to be used to pay the remaining balances. Reimbursements will not exceed 100% of the total of approved costs. Failure to use the Department of Education's invoice system and/or supply required information may result in denial of claim(s). School Districts should only provide school of origin transportation when there is a transportation request on file from the OODHS caseworker. ODE and ODHS will work collaboratively to develop a secure referral and invoicing process that ensures the protection of personal protected information. [Eligible transportation](#) costs include:

- Type 10 vehicles
- Costs for new bus routes
- [Taxi/Approved Rideshare](#)
- Reimbursement for Resource Parents
- Public Transportation passes/programs

Please work with your transportation and Foster Care liaisons to ensure that student services are being reimbursed through the right pathway.

### Interagency Collaboration

ODE and ODHS have created an agreement which allows both entities to contribute to the reimbursement of districts for transportation costs associated with students in foster care through [ESEA Title IV-E for transportation of Foster Care Students to a school outside their School District of Origin](#). School districts may receive these reimbursements by submitting a quarterly invoice to ODE; more information can be found on the [ODE Foster Care website](#). Districts will report the full cost, and the federal funds provided to ODE from ODHS will then be used to reimburse school districts for the cost of transportation not already covered by the transportation grant of the State School Fund (SSF). [OAR 581-](#)

[023-0040](#) specifies that funds received from this ODHS grant do not reduce the amount that can be claimed for reimbursement through the SSF transportation grant.

### Reimbursement Request Process

1. ODHS submits the School of Origin Transportation Form.
2. Districts provide transportation to children in Foster Care per ESEA.
3. Districts submit quarterly reimbursement requests to ODE using the spreadsheet template provided on the [ODE Foster Care webpage](#).
4. ODE Foster Care transportation liaison will conduct an initial review of the spreadsheets to ensure all required information is included.
  - a. The liaison will confirm receipt or will reach back out to the submitter with any questions and may request the submitter re-submit the request form.
5. ODE liaison summarizes all submissions at the end of the quarter and sends them to ODHS.
6. ODHS reviews all requests and reaches out to ODE if there are any issues.
  - a. ODE liaison will reach out to districts to resolve issues.
7. ODE and ODHS agree on final approved requests.
8. ODHS makes payment to ODE.
9. ODE uploads funds to EGMS for districts.

### Reimbursement Schedule

Quarter	Months Of Service	Submission Due Date
Q1	July 1- September 30	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday in November
Q2	October 1 - December 31	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday in February
Q3	January 1 - March 31	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday in May
Q4	April 1 - June 30	2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday in August

### Late Submissions

If there is a chance that your district is unable to submit a reimbursement request by the due dates listed above, please email [FosterCare@ode.oregon.gov](mailto:FosterCare@ode.oregon.gov) to request an extension. Not all requests will be approved, and histories of late submissions will be considered when determining approval for requests. Submissions will only be accepted for the quarter that is relevant and previous quarter reimbursements are unable to roll over.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Booking Page

If you'd like assistance in strategizing a specific transportation situation, you may schedule some 1:1 time with our staff on our [Booking Page](#).

### Office Hours

Foster Care Point of Contacts are welcome to join us on the second Tuesday of every month. You can email our [Foster Care inbox](#) to receive the participation information. During these meetings, we share general updates to the program per Federal or State policies and rules, host guest speakers, provide professional development, and hold space for questions and learning from peers.

### Newsletters

Two weeks after each Office Hours, we send a Newsletter that includes the slide deck and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). You can find historical Newsletters in the archive on our [Key Messages](#) page.

### Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

We want to ensure that you understand your responsibilities as a Foster Care Point of Contact in protecting student information. The Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement Process requires personally identifiable information to be shared between the District, ODE and ODHS. It is imperative that all staff working with these reimbursements understand their responsibilities under law to protect Student Information.

[House Bill 2715](#) prohibits school district employees or volunteers from posting, publishing, or otherwise making publicly available in a non-secure setting any personally identifiable student data relating to performance-based assessments. A school district employee may post, publish, or otherwise make available personally identifiable information only if the parent or guardian of the student gives consent to do so. If a student is 18 years of age or older, the student must give consent. This protection of personally identifiable student assessment information is in line with the overarching protections provided under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Additional guidance on maintaining the confidentiality of personally identifiable student information can be found in Section 2.5 Student Confidentiality of the [Test Administration Manual](#).

Individual student information and test results must not be made public unless:

- The district has explicitly identified state test scores and/or results as directory information consistent with FERPA guidelines.
- The release of the data does not expose the performance of students who did not meet the state's achievement standard; and



## Foster Care Transportation

- Parents are made aware in advance of the reward and potential consequences of any honor provided to students based on these data and are given an opportunity to decline the honor on behalf of their child.

Secure Student Identification Numbers (SSIDs) and other confidential personally identifiable student data must always remain secure and must not be associated with a student's name in an unsecured place or manner. Displaying student SSIDs with student names on any non-secure materials compromises the security of confidential student information. Please note that student body cards distributed to students are not secure, and districts are prohibited from including student SSIDs on student body cards or other non-secure materials.

## REMINDERS

We want to encourage you to build and maintain strong relationships and lines of communication so you can ensure you are being accurately reimbursed for the transportation of all students receiving Child Welfare Foster Care services.

The best solutions for transportation of students in Foster Care are developed when neighboring Districts work in close collaboration and find creative solutions. The ODHS Caseworker is not a transportation solution. Please be mindful of the fact that, while caseworkers may offer temporary support while a transportation plan is developed, ODHS has limited funding to support this expense. Consequently, it is crucial that your district creates a transportation plan as quickly as possible to ensure the costs incurred by transporting this student are eligible for reimbursement.

We want to make sure you are reimbursed the full amount you request, as often as possible.

### Resources:

- [Foster Care webpage](#)
- [Foster Care FAQs](#)
- [Technical Assistance Manual](#)
- [ODHS Foster Care Website](#)
- [2023-2024 ODHS Child Welfare Back to School Updates](#)
- [Transportation Guidance](#)