



Item VI.A. AITKIN COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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Aitkin, MN 56431

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Contract

Purchase of Service Agreement for the Transportation of Children and Youth in Foster Care Placement

Objective

This agreement is a requirement of the Every Child Succeeds Act of 2015 which requires counties and schools to work together to ensure that children in foster care can remain in the same school they attended prior to placement unless it is determined that it is not in the child's best interest. This agreement lays out a plan for addressing transportation of children in foster care and transportation costs will be split equally by the school and the county. Aitkin County Health and Human can receive some IV-E reimbursement for money spent on transportation costs.

Opportunity

This agreement will ensure that Aitkin County Health and Human Services and Hill City School are coordinating transportation for children in foster care that attend the Hill City School District.

Existing or New Contract

Existing Contract

Changes to Existing Contract

Not Applicable

Timeline for Execution

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

Conclusion

Aitkin County Health and Human Services asks that the board approve this Purchase of Service Agreement.

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

**PURCHASE OF SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR THE TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN AND
YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT**

This Agreement is entered into by and between Independent School District #002 (hereinafter referred to as the District) and Aitkin County.

WHEREAS, the parties desire for the District to provide certain transportation services for students in foster care placement under the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), youth placed in a foster care placement will remain enrolled in their school of origin unless a determination is made that it is not in their best interest. Best Interest factors include timeliness, consideration of the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement.

WHEREAS, the term foster care is defined as 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions and pre-adoptive homes. This definition is consistent with the Fostering Connections Act (45 CFR 1355.20)

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, the District is required to collaborate with the child welfare agency to develop and implement procedures for how transportation for youth in foster care will be provided, arranged and funded; including the use of child welfare funding to cover costs for such transportation. The District and Aitkin County agree to share the costs of the transportation. This agreement outlines the developed agreement about shared costs of transporting youth in foster care to and from school.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual terms and conditions contained herein, it is agreed by and between the parties hereto as follows:

1. TERM:

The term of this Agreement shall be in effect from September 1, 2021-August 31, 2022

2. EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT DECISIONS:

Aitkin County is responsible for determining appropriate education placement and the presumption should be that the child will remain in the school of origin to provide school

stability and educational continuity for the child, unless contrary to the child's best interests Aitkin County and for a representative of the school in which the child is currently enrolled will work with the Aitkin County foster care contact to determine, based on the child's best interest, whether the child should remain in the school of origin or consider a transfer to the local zoned school for the child's new residence.

If Aitkin County is considering moving a child to a new educational placement Aitkin County

will have a phone consultation with the school contact prior to gathering input about the best interests of the child in relation to their school placement. Aitkin County and the County Transition Education Services Liaison responsible for students in foster care will work collaboratively to inform the school regarding the placement decision-making process. The school will provide information about the appropriateness of the child's current educational placement. Aitkin County shall take into consideration this information and other best interest factors found in paragraph three in making educational decisions. The County Transition Education Services Liaison and/or a representative of the school in which the child is enrolled will be asked to participate in the meeting, either by phone or in person. Aitkin County will identify a point of contact from the agency to work directly with the District Transportation Director to ensure a smooth transition.

3. **BEST INTEREST FACTORS:**

When considering placement, the following best interest factors should be considered:

- The student's age
- The school attended by the student's siblings
- Length of time the student is expected to remain at the current placement and the possible location of housing intended to be long-term
- Distance of commute and the impact it may have on the student's education and other student centered, transportation related factors, including travel time
- The preferences of the student, the birth parents or prior custodians as appropriate and the student's foster care parent(s) or current placement provider
- School stability and educational continuity
- Time remaining in the academic year
- Personal safety, attendance, academic progress and social involvement of the student in the current school
- The impact transferring the student to a new school may have on his or her needs and progress academically, emotionally, socially and physically
- Availability of classes to avoid credit loss and for timely graduation or promotion
- Documentation of the best interest determination shall be maintained in the Aitkin County case file and student's cumulative record.

4. **SERVICES:**

Transportation Services will be provided by the District in the following manner:

- a. **Students who are able to be transported to school on an existing route:** When feasible, students placed in foster care will be transported to school on an existing bus route. Feasibility considerations will include the location, length of bus ride, space available on the route and availability of any needed accommodations. District will cover the associated costs.
- b. **Students who have an IEP indicating the need for specialized transportation:** If students are residing and attending school within the District, the District will assume costs required for transporting the student to school.

- c. Students who are unable to be transported on an existing route. If a route does not exist or is not a feasible option for the student placed in foster care, the District will negotiate with Aitkin County to determine the best possible means of transportation. The District and Aitkin County will share the transportation costs identified in Section 5a.
- d. Students residing in a foster care placement outside of District boundaries, but attending a District School: If students are residing in a foster care placement outside of District boundaries, but are attending school within the District, transportation will be arranged by the District. The District will negotiate with Aitkin County to determine the best possible means of transportation. The District and Aitkin County will share the transportation costs identified in Section 5a.
- e. Students placed in foster care within District and attending a non-USD 2 Area School: The District will bear no financial responsibility for this student. Aitkin County and the School District where the student attends are expected to make arrangements for transportation and the associated costs.

5. PAYMENT FOR SERVICES

- a. The District and Aitkin County agree to split the costs of the transportation described in Section 4, including but not limited to staff time and third party carriers as appropriate. Mileage reimbursement is to be set at the current IRS rate. All transportation costs identified in this agreement are to be split equally; the District and the Aitkin County agree to each assume to pay 50% of the costs.
- b. Aitkin County will identify a point of contact from the agency to work directly with the District Transportation Director to ensure transportation arrangements are timely and authentic. All transportation requests are to be requested by the Aitkin County point of contact and are to be honored if following all guidelines.
- c. Transportation services will be provided by the District and its contracted transportation providers, when possible. If there is driver or vehicle unavailability, Aitkin County will be responsible for transportation of the student placed in foster care.
- d. Aitkin County will compensate the District for transportation provided outside of the District pursuant to this agreement at the rate billed by the district or its third party provider. Copies of the invoices from the private transportation company will be provided to Aitkin County.
- e. The District will submit itemized invoices to the Aitkin County contact on a quarterly basis. The invoices will detail each trip provided by the District, the total time for each trip and the associated charge. Payment shall be made within 35 days of receipt of the invoice.
- f. In situations where transportation is being funded by Aitkin County, Aitkin County point of contact will notify the District Transportation Director when foster care placements end.

6. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

It is the responsibility of Aitkin County and the District to collaborate in determining the child's best interest for school transportation and to resolve any conflicts whenever possible. The parties will attempt to informally resolve any dispute involving the best means and costs of transportation of a child in foster care.

Aitkin County and the District will pursue the formal dispute resolution procedures below, when informal resolution is not possible, or when informal resolution would result in disruptions to the child's education.

To formally dispute a decision regarding transportation for a student in foster care the following steps should be taken:

1. The process for resolution between the two parties requires a written explanation of the conflict from the disputing party within 24 hours.
2. Upon receipt of the explanation, the decision will be reviewed by the District and the Director of Aitkin County Health and Human Services. Input will be reviewed from all parties and a decision by the Director will be communicated within three business days. A decision could be made to uphold the decision, reverse the decision or require the parties to participate in a Decision Making Team meeting.
3. The County will determine the placement of the child until the dispute resolution process has concluded. During this time the transportation costs will be divided equally between the District and Aitkin County.
4. If disagreement on school transportation remains, guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education will be requested.

7. PROVIDER NOT AN EMPLOYEE:

It is agreed by the parties that at all times and for all purposes herein, District and its subcontractors are independent providers and not employees of Aitkin County. The District shall be entitled to none of the rights, privileges, or benefits of Aitkin County employees except as otherwise stated herein.

8 INDEMNIFICATION:

Each party shall be liable for its own acts and the acts of its representatives to the extent provided by law and hereby agrees to indemnify, hold harmless and defend each other, its officers, employees, and volunteers against any and all liability, costs, damages, expenses, claims or actions, including attorney's fees which the others, its officers, employees and volunteers may hereinafter sustain, incur, or be required to pay, arising out of or by reason of any act or omission of the Party, its agents, employees or volunteers, in the execution, performance, or failure to adequately perform its obligation pursuant to this Agreement.

9. TERMINATION OF CONTRACT:

Either party may terminate this Agreement with or without cause, upon a thirty (30) days written notice to the other party.

10. STANDARDS:

The District and Aitkin County shall comply with all applicable State statutes and regulations as well as local ordinances and rules now in effect or hereafter adopted.

11. DATA PRACTICES:

All data collected, created, received, maintained, or disseminated for any purposes by the activities of the District or Aitkin County because of this contract is governed by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Chapter 13, as amended, the Minnesota Rules implementing such act now in force or as adopted, as well as federal regulations on data privacy.

12 AMENDMENTS:

This agreement may be supplemented, amended or revised only in writing by agreement of both parties

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Agreement on the dates written below.

Ind. School District #002

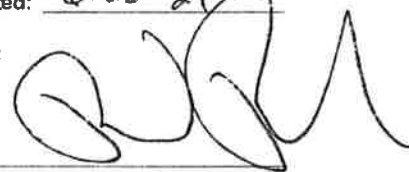
By:

*  _____

School Board Chair

Dated: 6-28-21

By:

*  _____

Superintendent

Dated: 6-28-21

Aitkin County

By:

* _____

Chairperson

Aitkin County Board

Dated: _____

By:

* _____

Aitkin County Attorney

Dated: _____