



# Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care

**Jackie Jacobson**

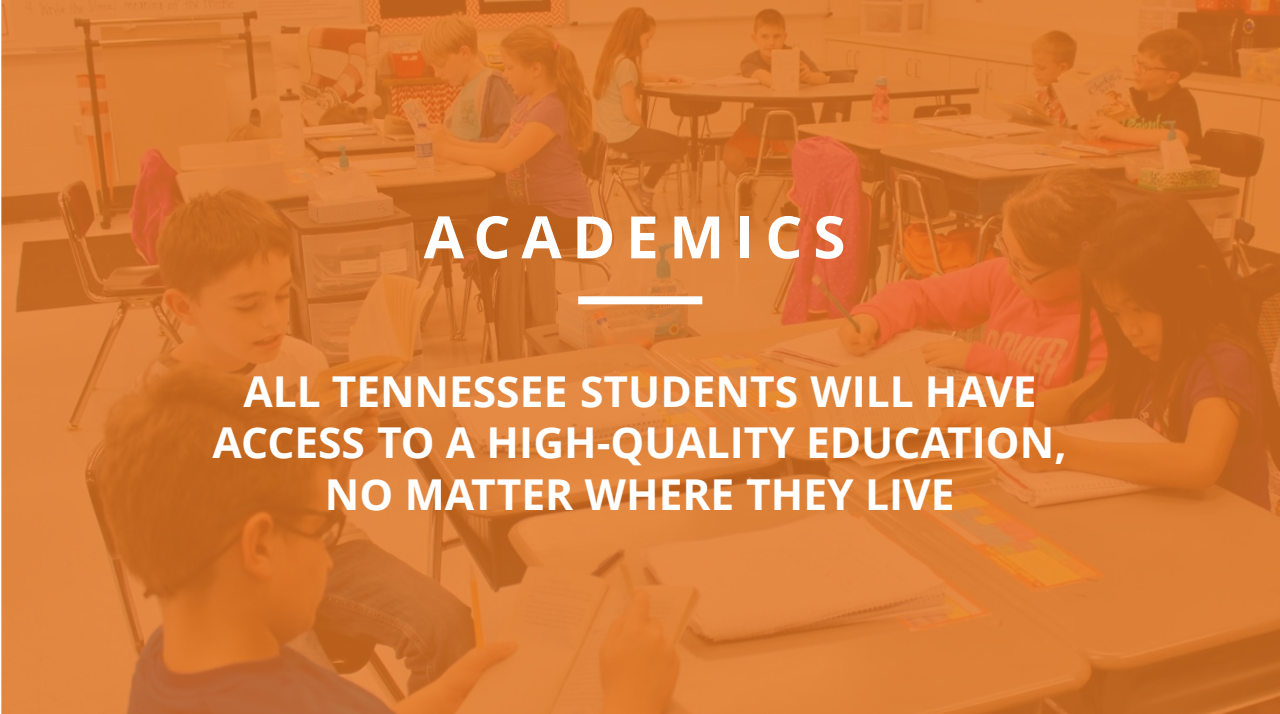
*Non-Traditional Educational Programs Manager | Federal Programs and Oversight*





# BEST FOR ALL

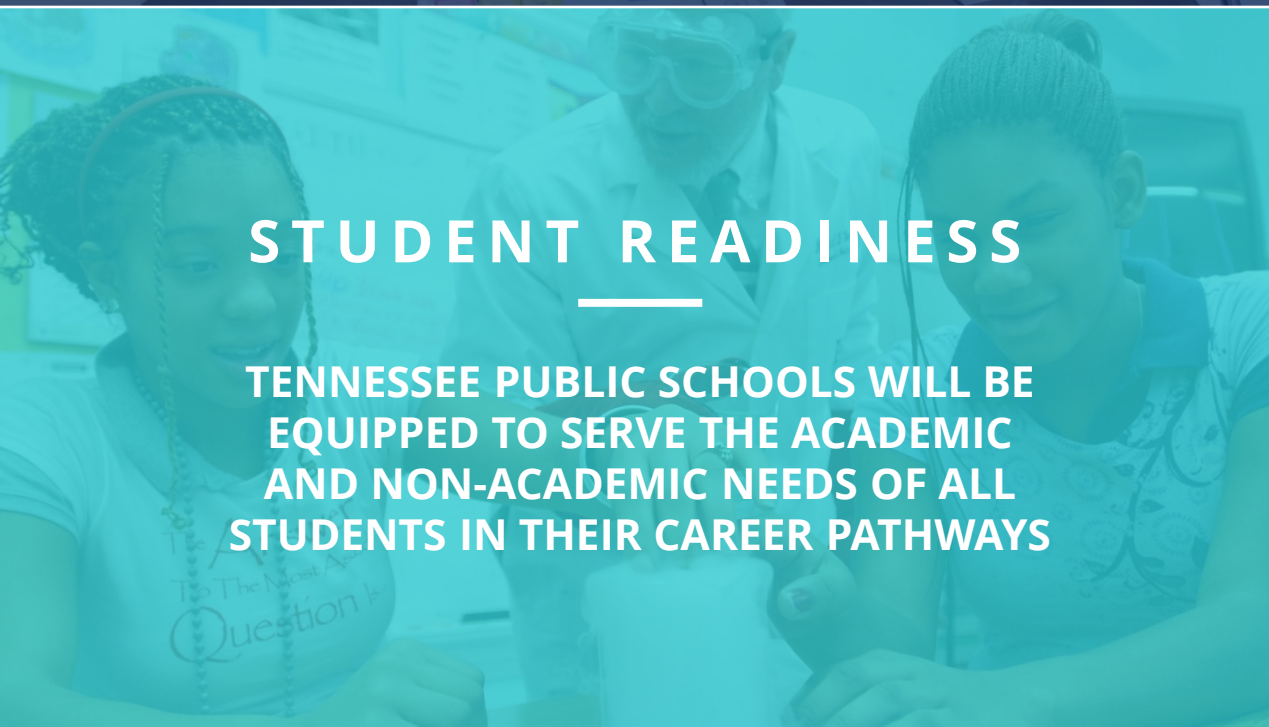
We will set all students on a path to success.



## ACADEMICS

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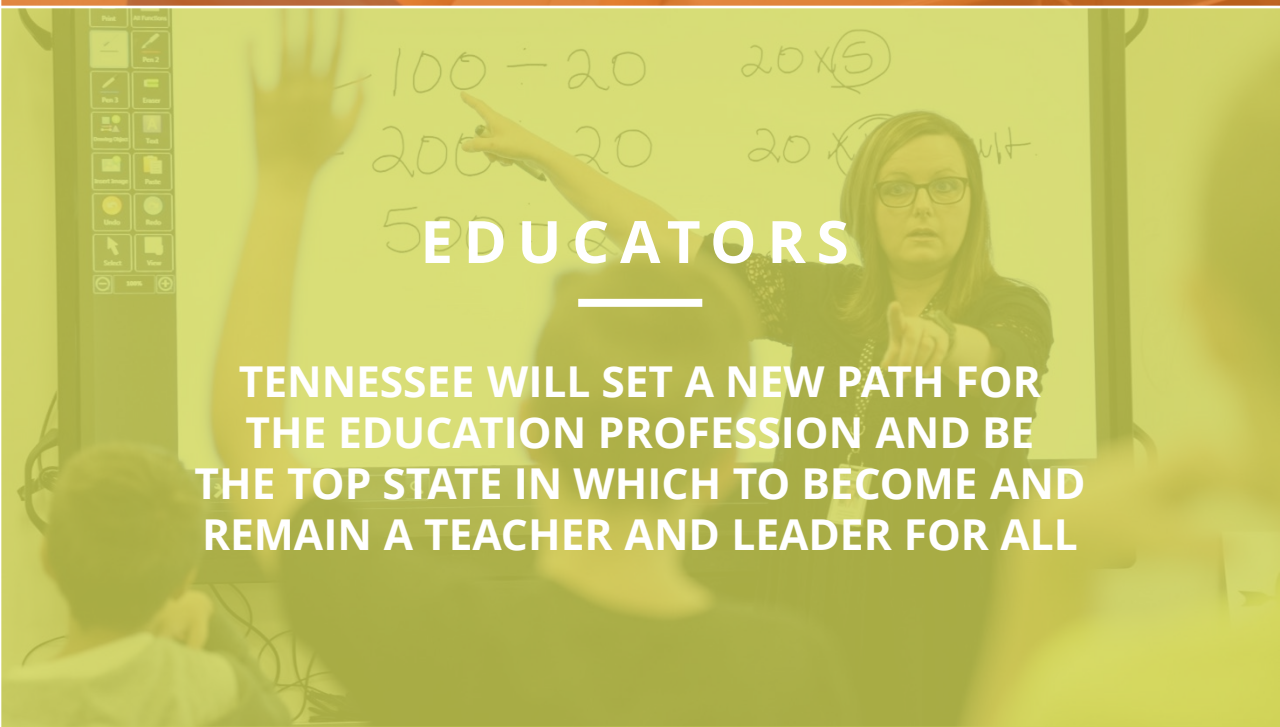
ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE



## STUDENT READINESS

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TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS IN THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS



## EDUCATORS

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TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE IN WHICH TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER FOR ALL



# Agenda

- Introductions
- Opening Activity
- Collaboration is Key
- What is Foster Care?
- Why this Matters
- Identifying Students in Foster Care
- Best Interest Determination
- Transportation
- Enrollment



# Norms and Expectations

- Take calls and necessary phone communications outside of the session room.
- Remain engaged.
- Visit a team member at the registration table if you have questions about the conference.
- All session slide decks are available in ePlan > TDOE Resources > Federal Programs and Oversight (FPO) > Federal Programs Professional Development > 2022 ESSA/ESSER Conference.



# Opening Activity



# Activity: Garbage Bag Suitcase

- What items do you take with you?
- What have you left behind?

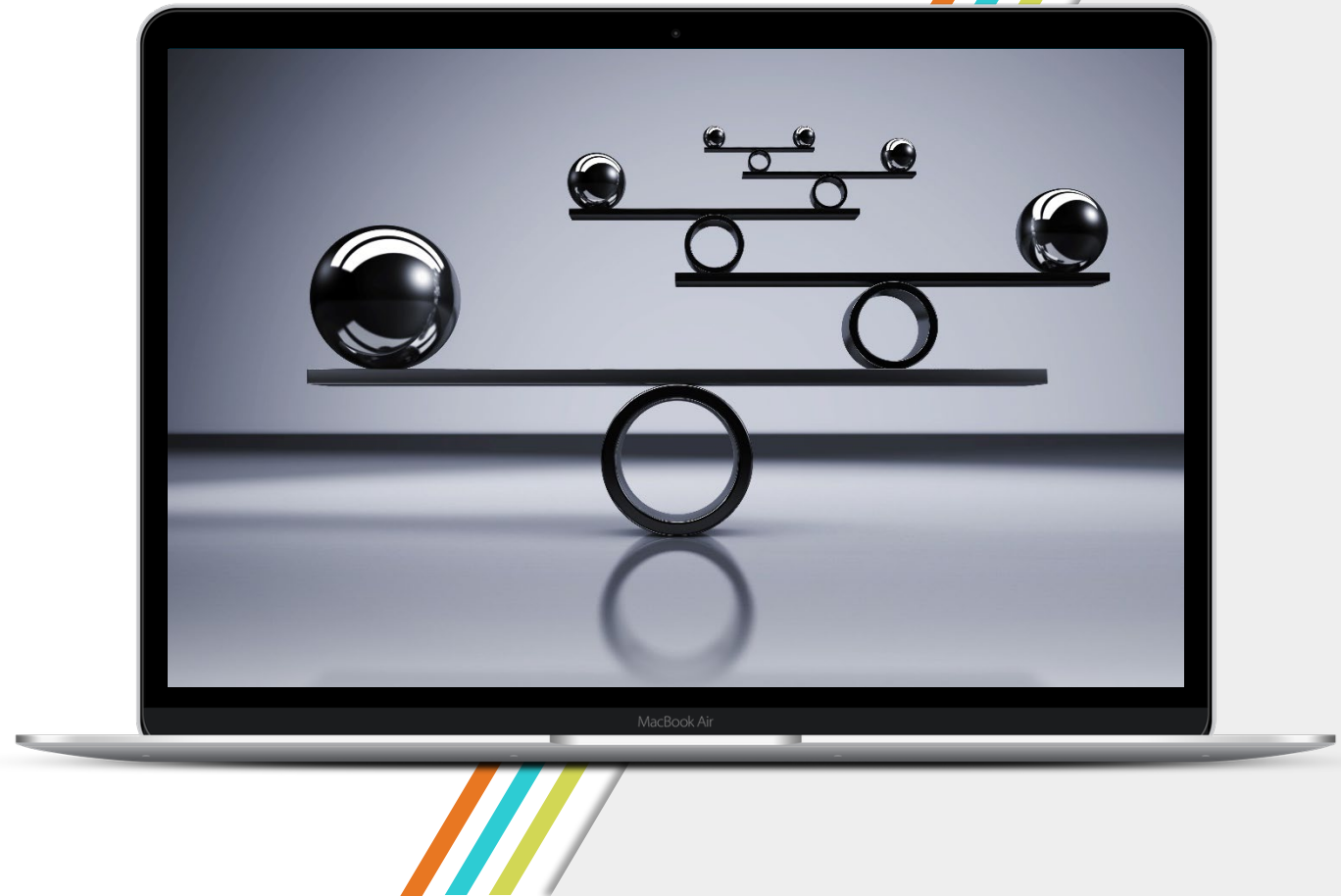


# Collaboration is Key



# Lots of Moving Parts

- Everyone plays an important role
- Misalignment can topple the entire structure





# ESSA Requirement

- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must provide assurances that children in foster care enroll or remain in the school of origin unless there is a determination that it is not in their best interest to attend the school of origin.



# Collaborative Legislation



<b>Fostering Connections (2008)</b>	<b>Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)</b>
Coordination with LEAs	Collaboration with child welfare agencies
Presumption to remain in school of origin	Presumption to remain in school of origin
Best interest determination	Best interest determination
Immediate and appropriate enrollment	Immediate enrollment, even without documentation
Permissible use of federal Title funds to support transportation	Transportation must be arranged, provided and funded
	State and local points of contact



# What is Foster Care?



# Who is a Child in Foster Care?

- The Title I foster care provisions apply to all children in foster care enrolled in public schools. Students in pre-K should be included as well if the LEA offers a preschool program.
- “Foster care” is defined as 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) has placement and care responsibility.
- This includes placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.



# Why this Matters



# Children in Foster Care

- Children in foster care:
  - are a vulnerable population;
  - typically make more unscheduled school changes than their peers in a given school year; and
  - compared to their peers, experience:
    - **lower** high school graduation rates,
    - **lower** scores on academic assessments, and
    - **higher** rates of grade retention, chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and expulsions.



# Mobility and Graduation

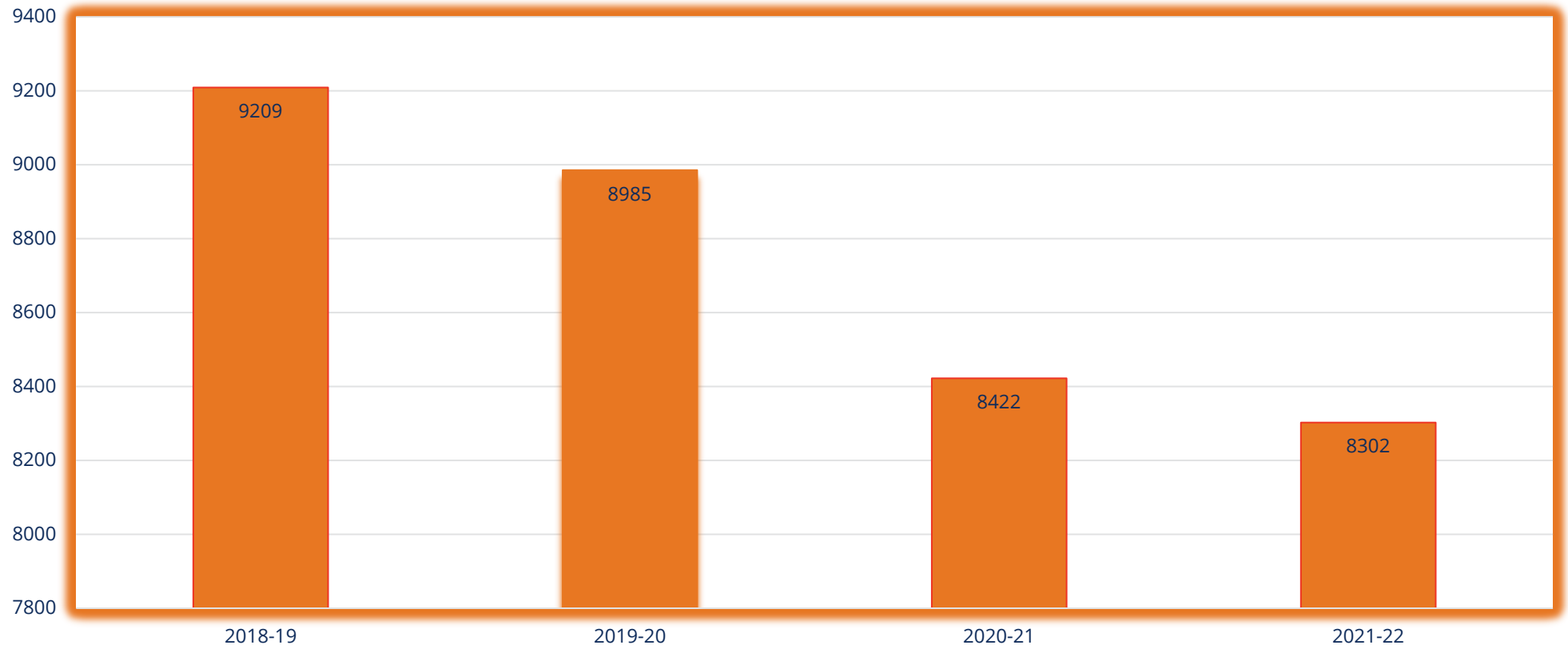
“In a national study of 1,087 foster care alumni, youth who had one fewer placement change per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving care.”

*Legal Center for Foster Care and Education*



# Foster Care in Tennessee

Students in Foster Care Coded as FOS01





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# Identifying Students in Foster Care



# Procedures for Identifying Students in Foster Care



# DCS Education Specialists

- Students should also be identified at the time of enrollment by the DCS Education Specialist or DCS caseworker if a student needs a best interest determination (BID) meeting.
- This notification allows for real-time communication between DCS and the LEA to ensure that BID meetings happen in a timely manner.
- The Education Specialists are regional and have specific LEA assignments, but caseworkers may be employed by DCS or a contracted agency such as Youth Villages.



# Let's Share!

How did you connect or engage with students in foster care last year?



# Best Interest Determination



# Best Interest Determination Meetings

- Youth in foster care are enrolled or remain in their school of origin unless a determination is made that it is not in their best interest.
- The best interest determination is based on multiple factors including, but not limited to, the consideration of:
  - the appropriateness of the current educational setting;
  - the length of the commute;
  - the preferences of the child, parents, or education decision-makers;
  - the placement of siblings; and
  - the availability of required services.

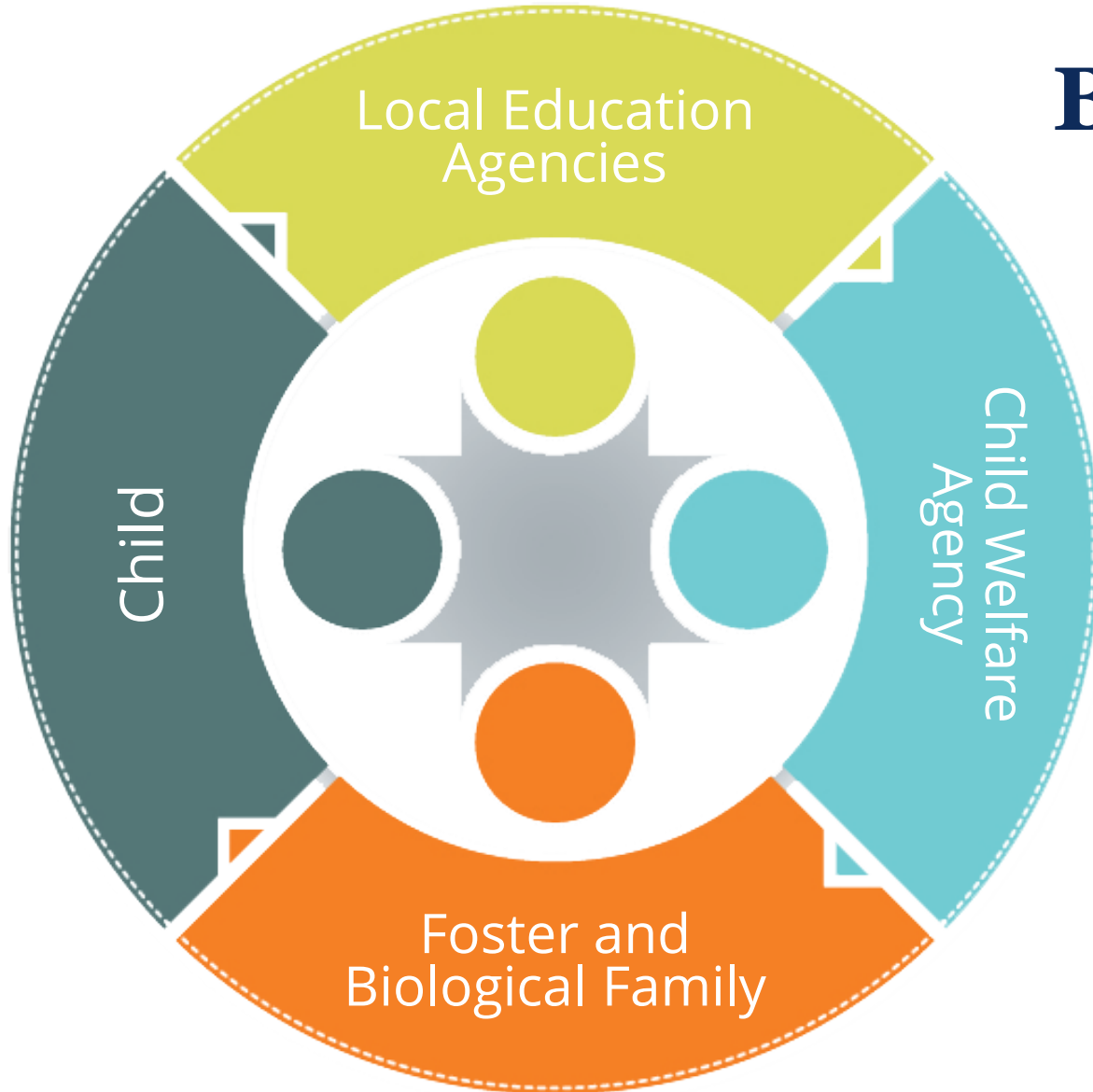


# Best Interest Determination Meetings

- Best interest determination meetings (BIDs) are the heart of the school stability process.
- Conducting a quality and thoughtful BID can avoid future disputes that may arise.
- BIDs require all systems and individuals involved to focus on a specific child and think outside of their own individual interests and perspectives.



# BID Meetings



- Gather meaningful input from:
  - School counselors, teachers, and coaches
  - Child’s parent(s), child, child advocate, guardian ad litem, foster parent(s), and mental health providers



# Let's Share!

Discuss the collaboration you have had with DCS. What barriers, if any, have you encountered?



# Transportation



# Transportation: ESSA Requirements

- LEAs must provide assurances that they will collaborate with DCS to develop and implement clear, written procedures for how transportation will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's time in foster care.
- Children in foster care needing transportation to their school of origin must promptly receive that transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act.





# Transportation: ESSA Requirements

- If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the LEA will provide such transportation if:
  - the local child welfare agency agrees to reimburse the LEA for the cost of such transportation;
  - the LEA agrees to pay for the cost; or
  - the LEA and local child welfare agency agree to share the cost (ESEA 112(c)(5)(B)).



# Transportation: DCS

- The child welfare agency must ensure that the educational stability plan of each child in foster care includes an assurance that the child welfare agency has coordinated with the appropriate LEA(s) to ensure the child can remain in the school of origin, or if remaining in that school is not in the child's best interest, an assurance that the child will be enrolled immediately in a new school.



# Let's Share!

What challenges have you experienced at the start of this school year?



# Enrollment





# Immediate Enrollment

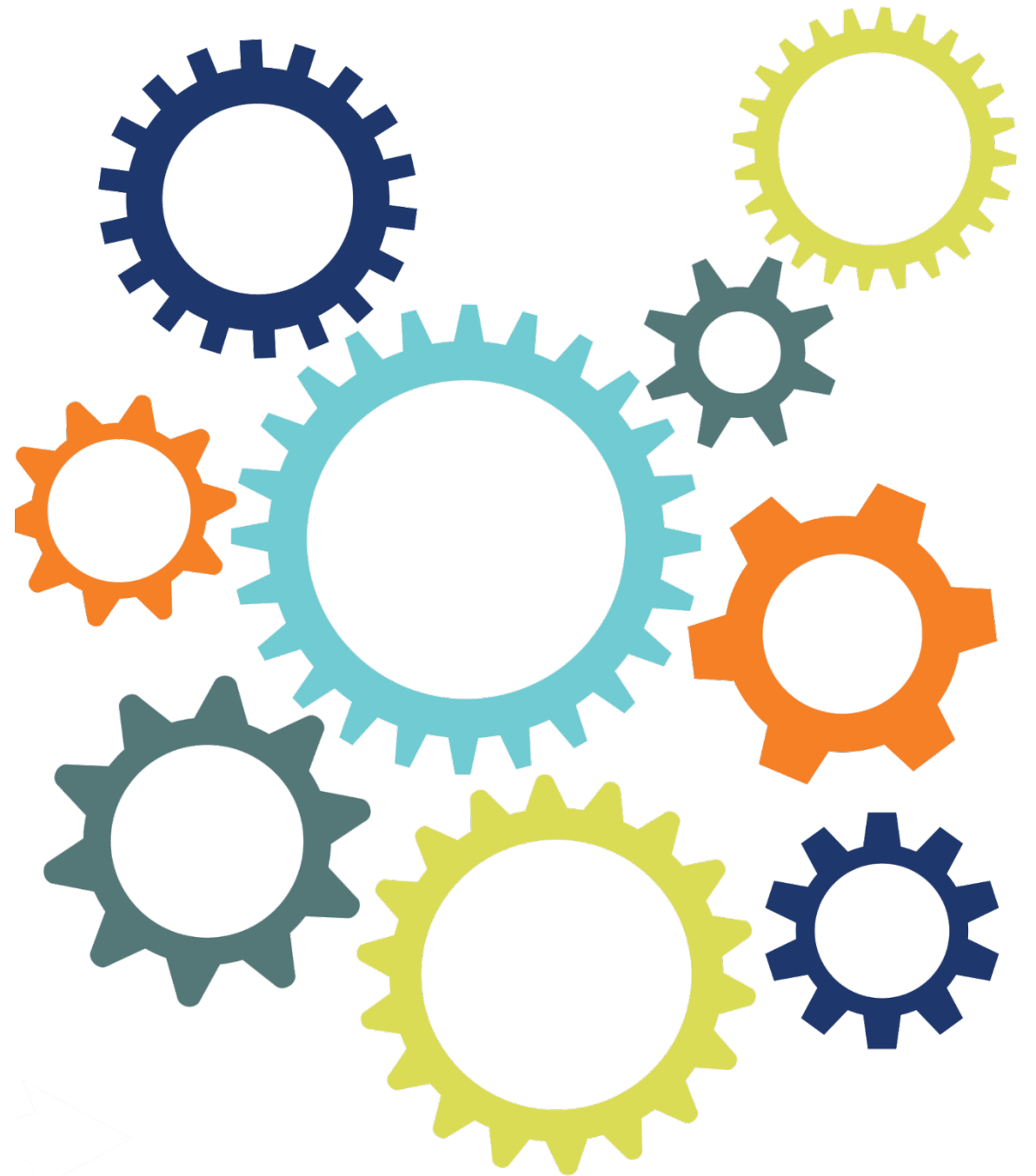
- Barriers to enrollment must be eliminated.
- LEAs must ensure that a child in foster care is immediately enrolled in his or her new school even if the student does not have required documentation.
- The enrolling school must immediately contact the child's school of origin to obtain all relevant records.
- The school of origin must immediately transfer the records.





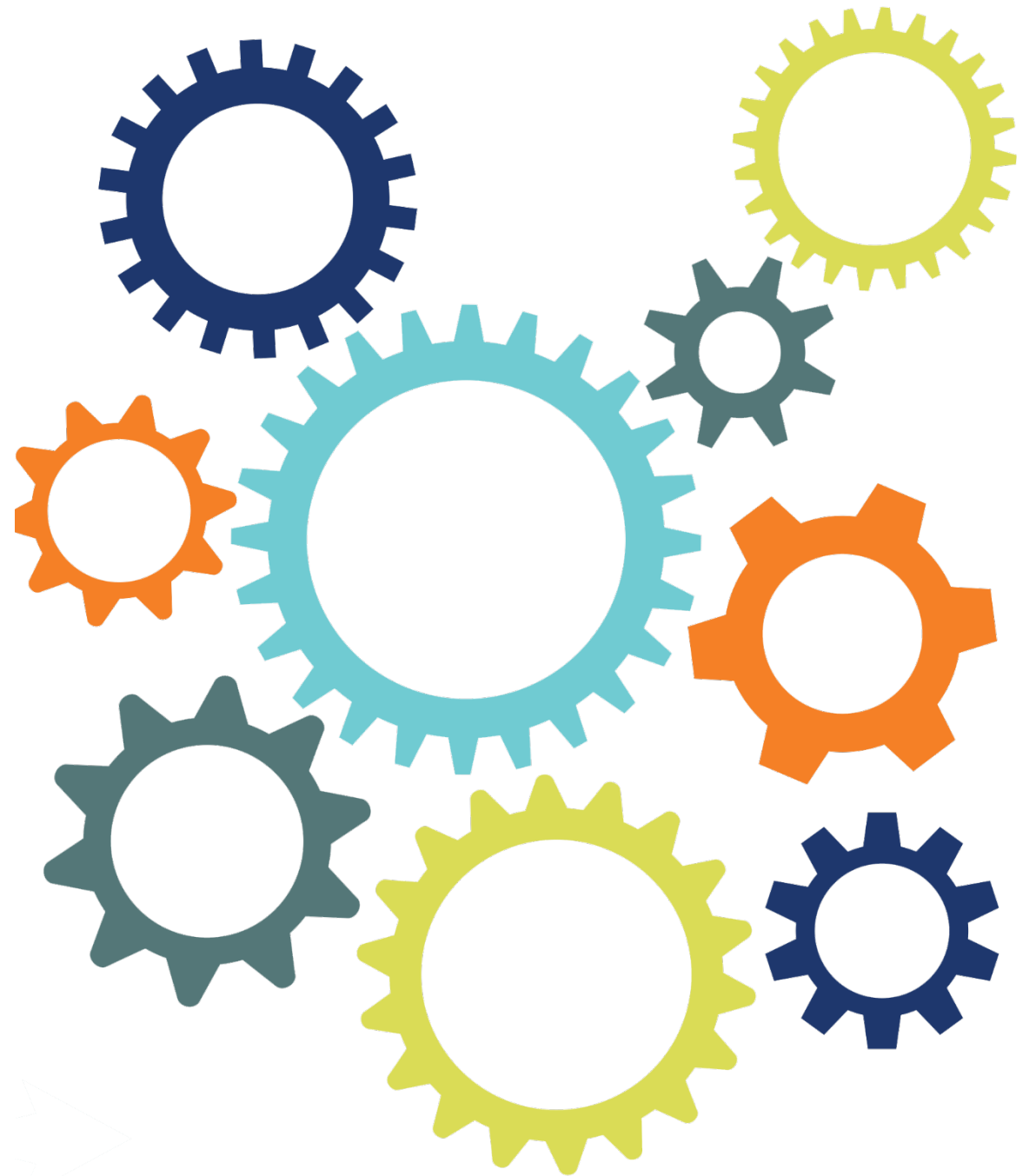
# Let's Discuss!

- Zach is a 6th grader who, in October, has been placed with his siblings at a foster home 30 minutes away from his school of origin. His siblings will be attending the school of zone.



# Let's Discuss!

- Zach's case plan goal is reunification with his parents, and DCS thinks this will be achieved within six months.



**Thank you for being  
a guiding light!**



# Contact Information

- **Jackie Jacobson** | Foster Care Point of Contact
  - [Jackie.Jacobson@tn.gov](mailto:Jackie.Jacobson@tn.gov)
  - (615) 390-4549

# Fraud, Waste or Abuse

Citizens and agencies are encouraged to report fraud, waste, or abuse in State and Local government.

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**1-800-232-5454**

Notifications can also be submitted electronically at:

**<http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/hotline>**

# Please Share your Feedback:

[https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/educational\\_stability\\_for\\_youth\\_in\\_foster\\_care\\_feedback](https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/educational_stability_for_youth_in_foster_care_feedback)

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

