



# Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care

**Jackie Jacobson | Non-Traditional Educational Programs Manager**

*Federal Programs and Oversight*

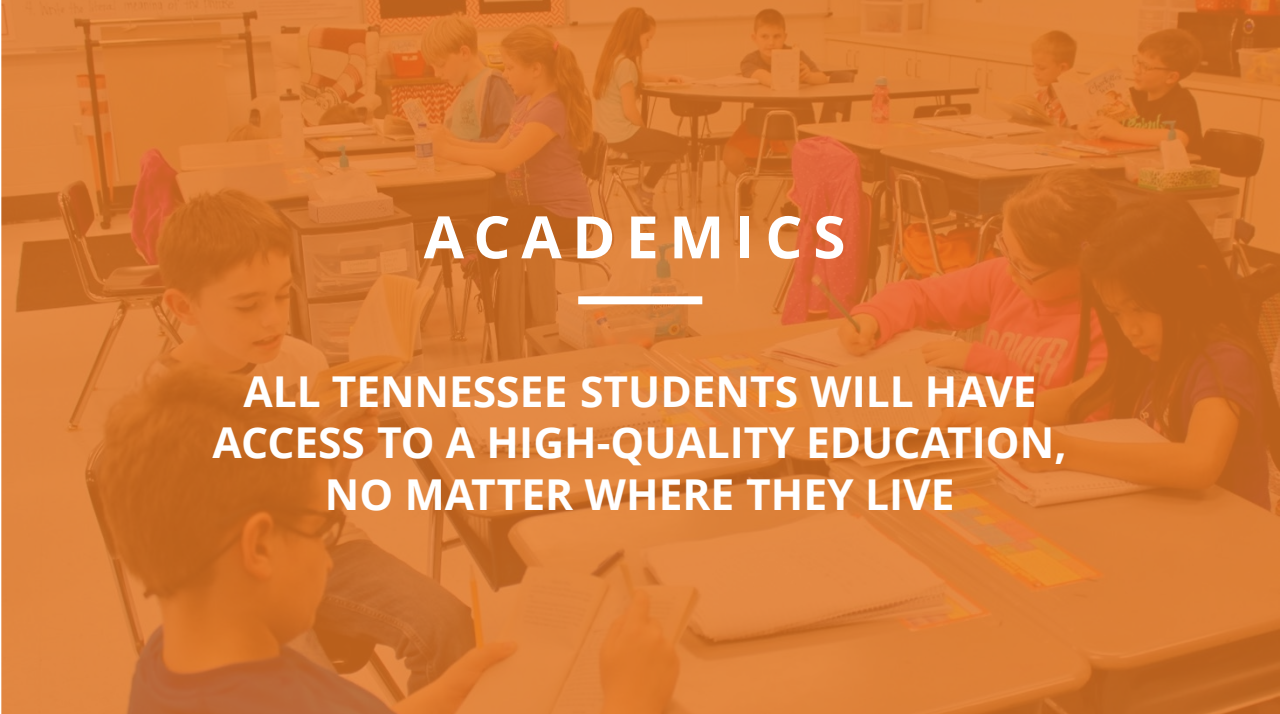
December 2022





# BEST FOR ALL

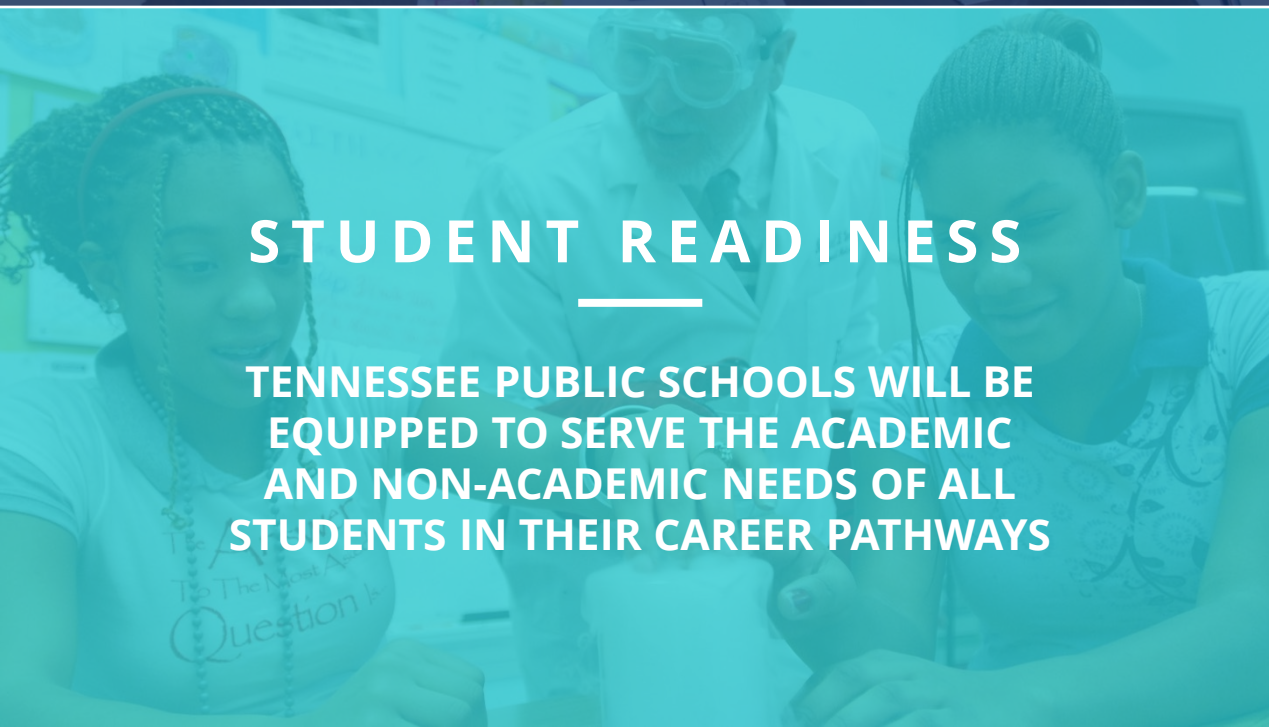
We will set all students on a path to success.



## ACADEMICS

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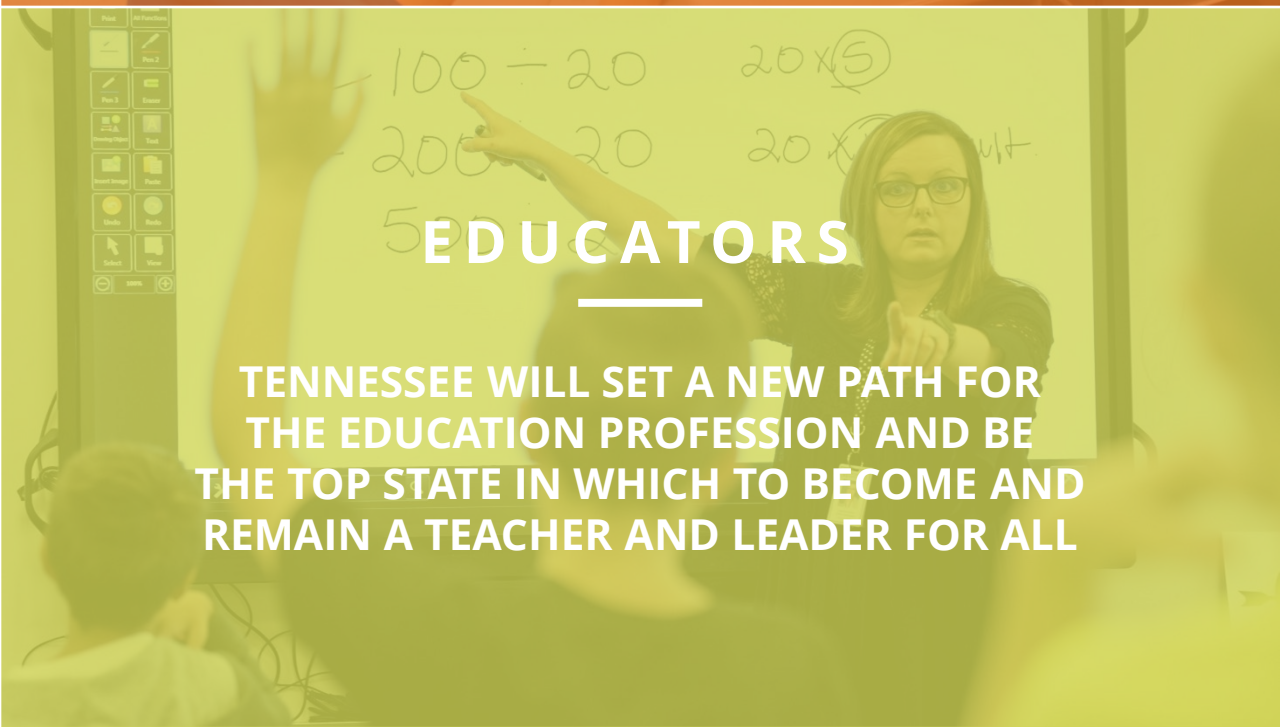
ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE



## 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





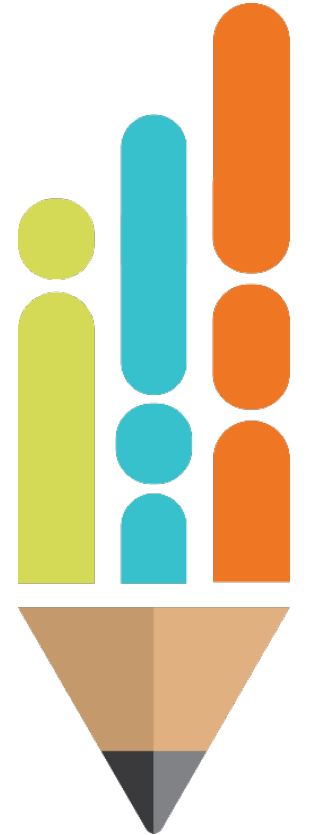
# Agenda

- Introductions
- Opening Activity
- What is Foster Care?
- The State of Foster Care in Tennessee
- Collaboration is Key
- The Department of Children's Services (DCS)
- Responsibilities of the LEA
- Identifying Students in Foster Care
- Best Interest Determination Meetings
- Transportation



# Jackie Jacobson

- Non-Traditional Educational Programs Manager
- State Foster Care Point of Contact
- Former high school principal (Arizona)
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Former principal and therapist at a district-based day treatment program for 120 ED/BD students
- Masters in Social Work
- Masters in Educational Leadership



# Opening Activity



# Activity



# Activity: Garbage Bag Suitcase

- What are taking with you?



# Activity: Garbage Bag Suitcase

- What have you left behind?





# What is Foster Care?

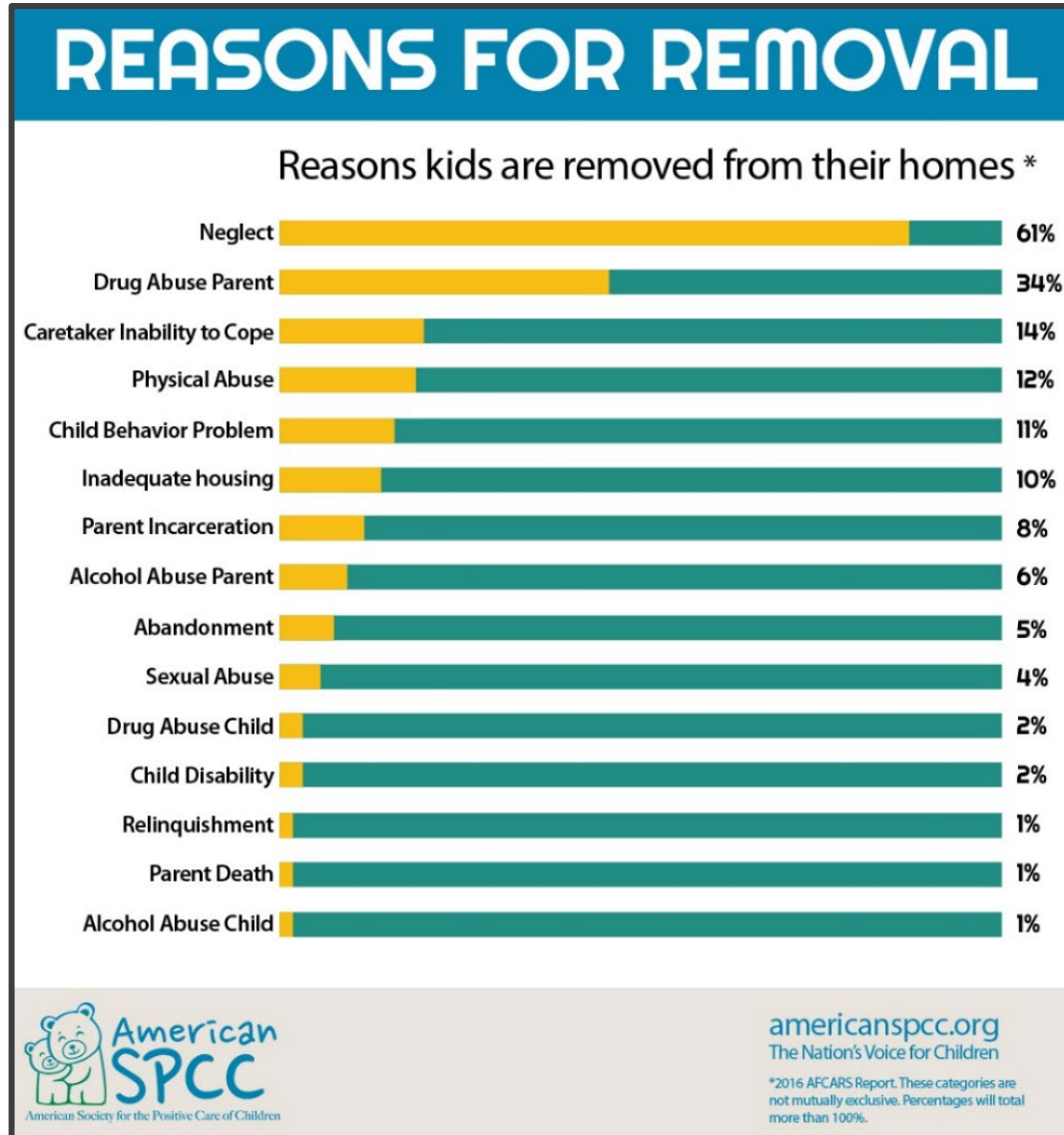


# Who is a Child in Foster Care?

- 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.



# Reasons for Removal













# Why This Matters



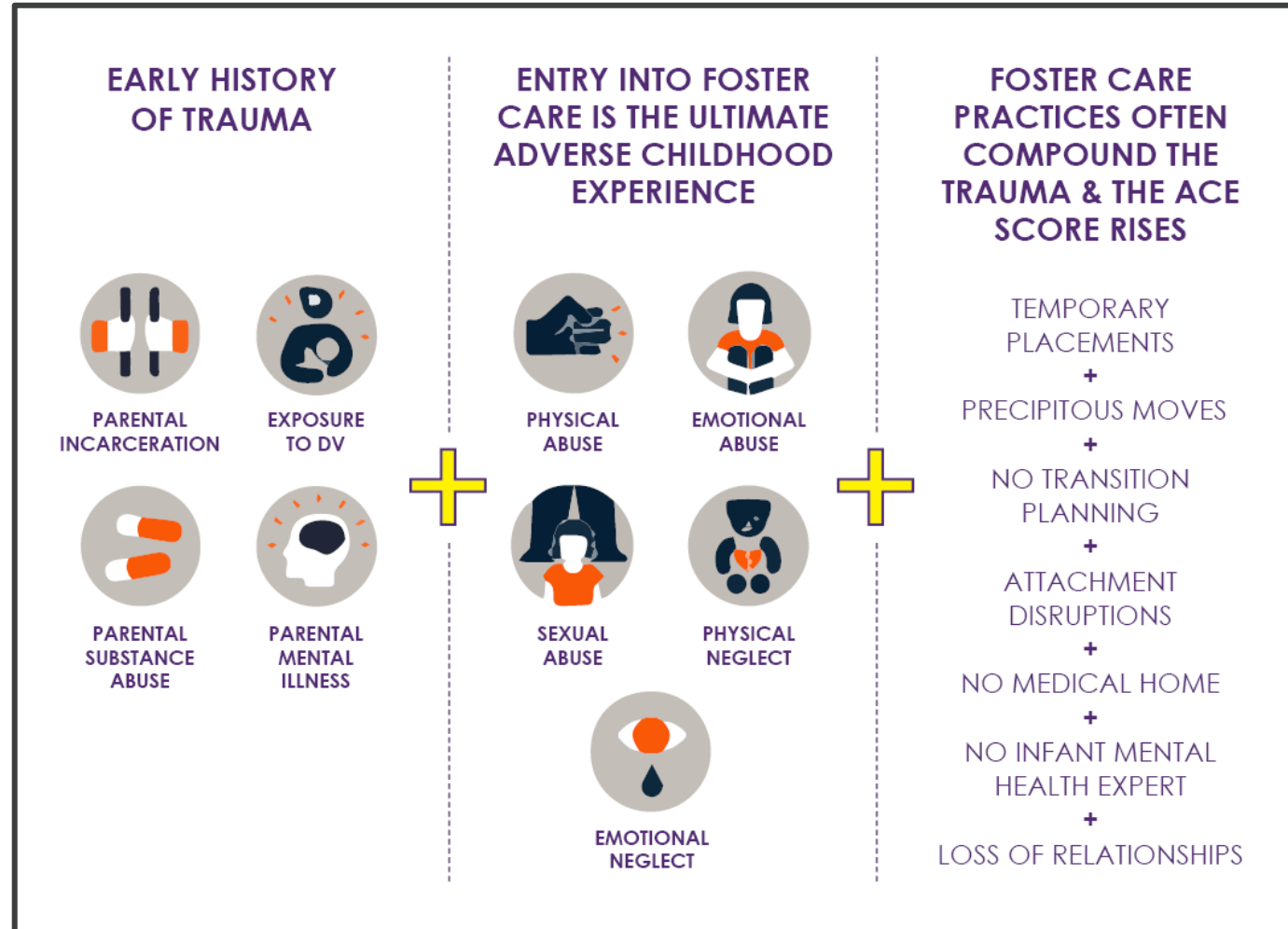


# Adverse Childhood Experiences

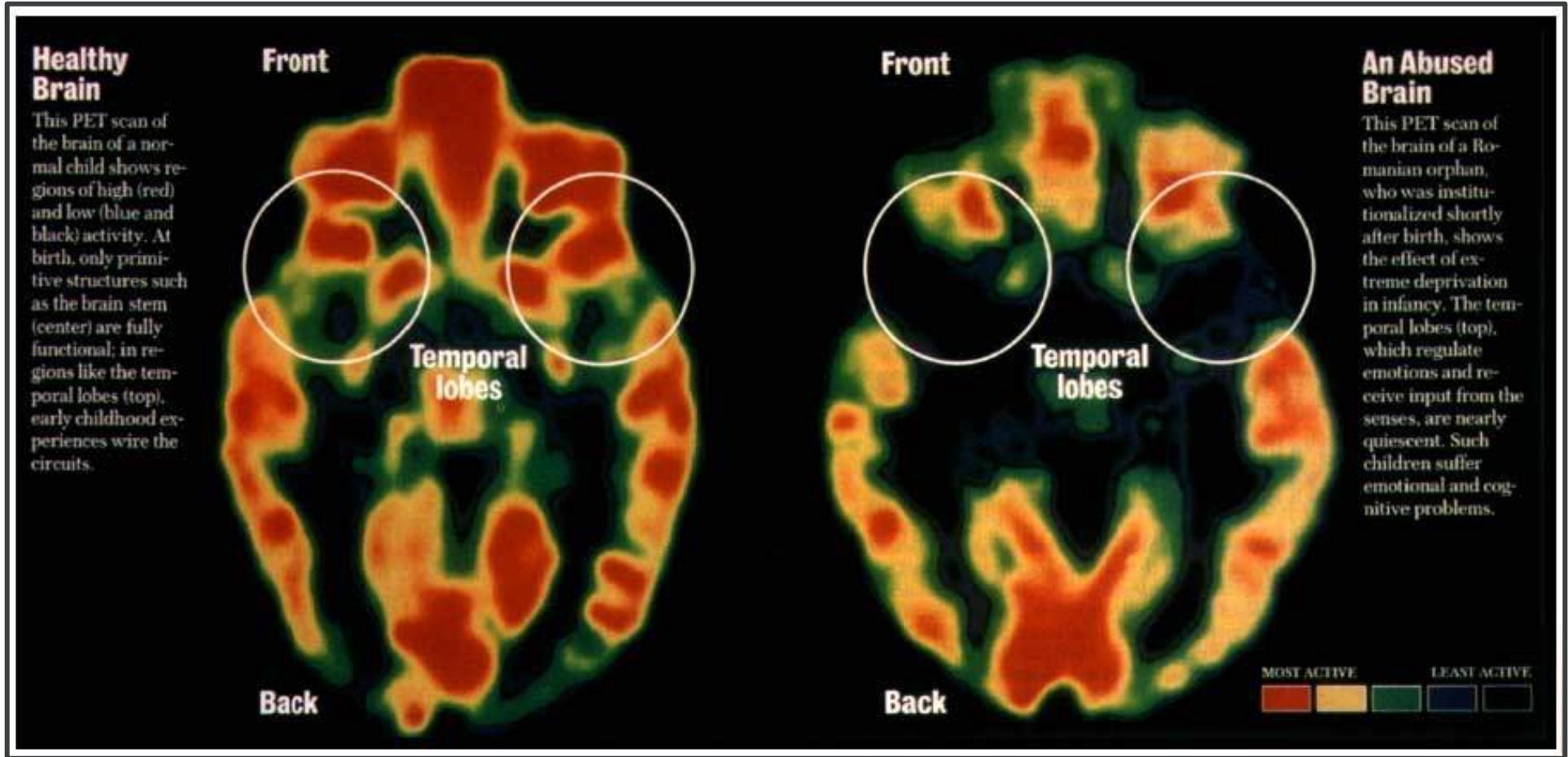
ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
 Physical	 Physical	 Mental Illness	 Incarcerated Relative
 Emotional	 Emotional	 Mother treated violently	 Substance Abuse
 Sexual		 Divorce	



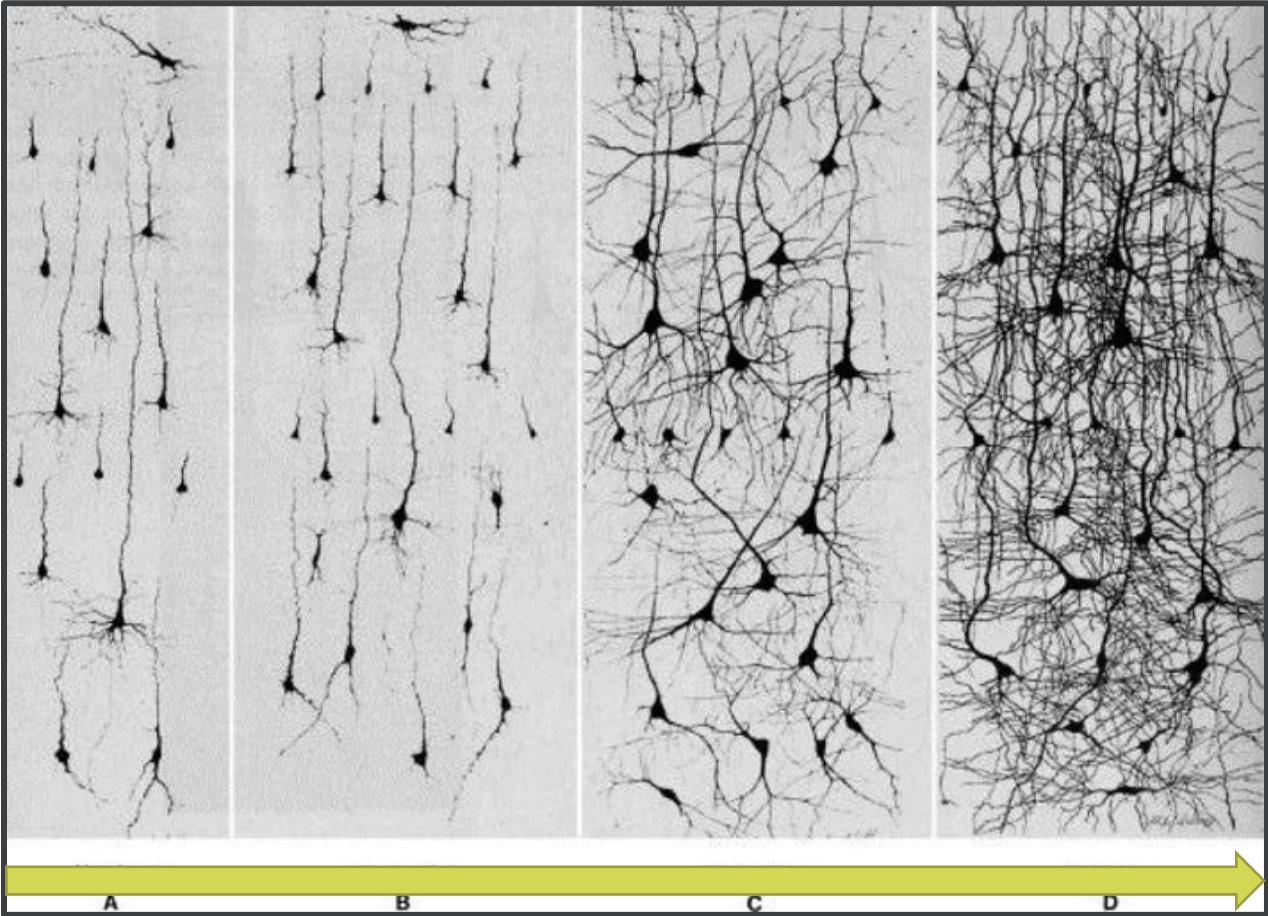
# Foster Care is the Ultimate ACE



# How ACEs Impact the Brain



# Neural Connections



Birth

2 Years

What happens if development is disrupted?





# Foster Children Struggle Academically

- Only 54% of young adults who age out of care have completed high school.
- Youth in foster care attending public schools score 16 to 20 percentile points below youth in the general population in statewide standardized tests.
- Youth in foster care on average read at only a 7th-grade level after completing 10th or 11th grade.
- 10% of 15-year-old students in out-of-home care have been incarcerated.

Source: Legal Center for Foster Care & Education



# 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*



# Let's Share!

How might engagement with children in foster care be a unique challenge?



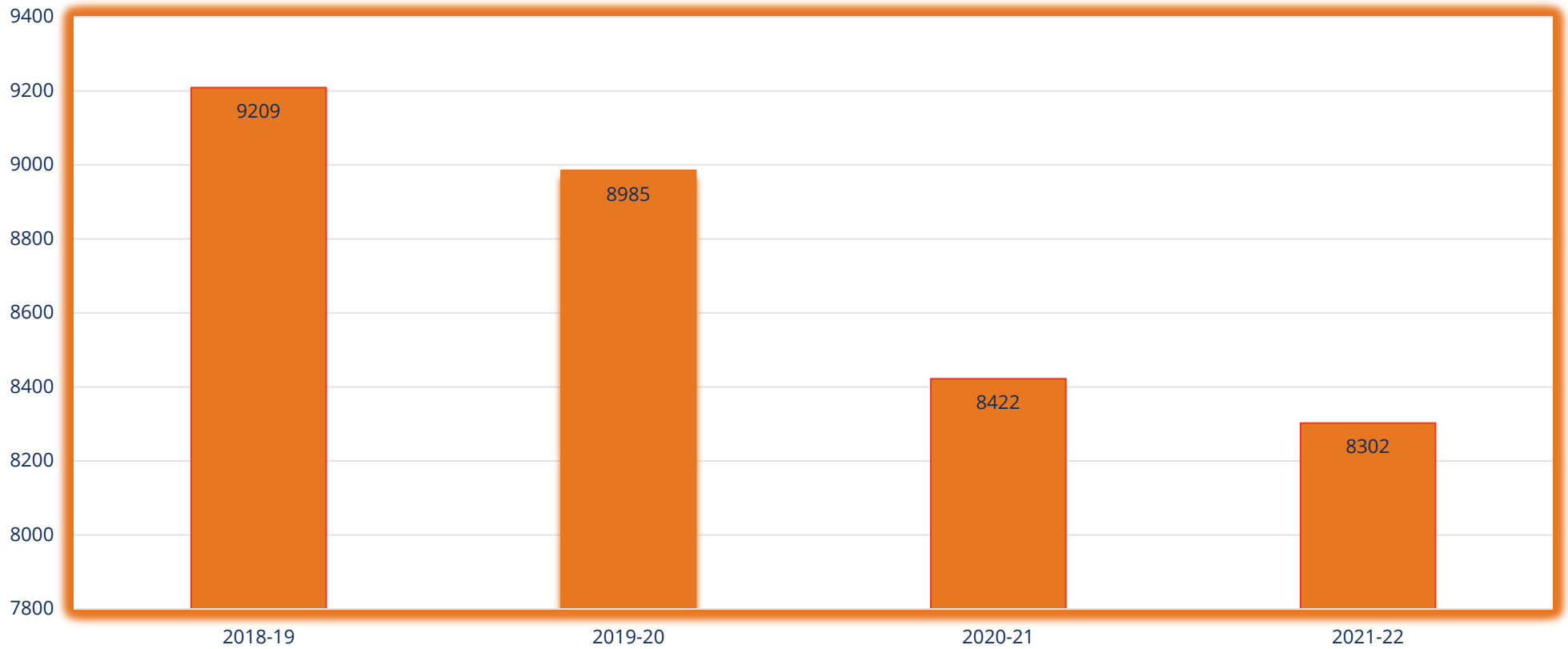
# The State of Foster Care in Tennessee





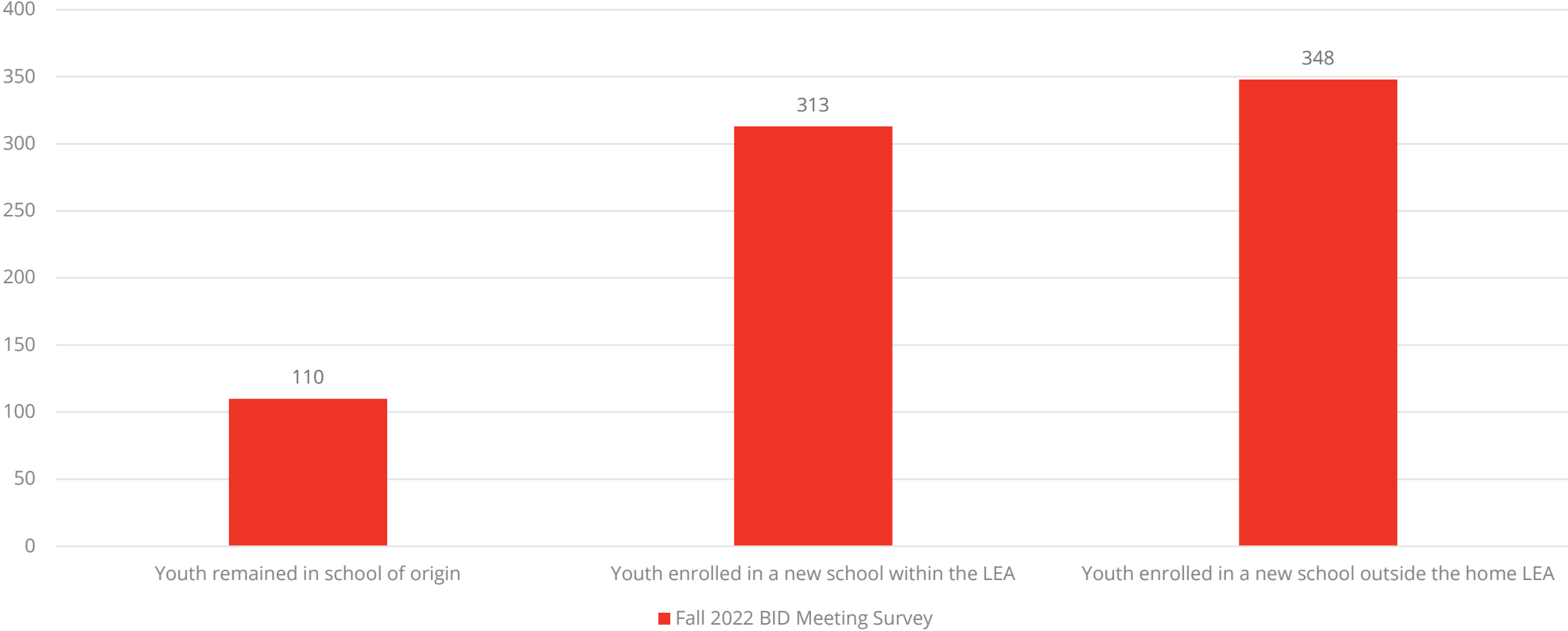
# Foster Care in Tennessee

Students in Foster Care Coded as FOS01



# Fall 2022 BID Meeting Survey

Fall 2022 BID Meeting Survey

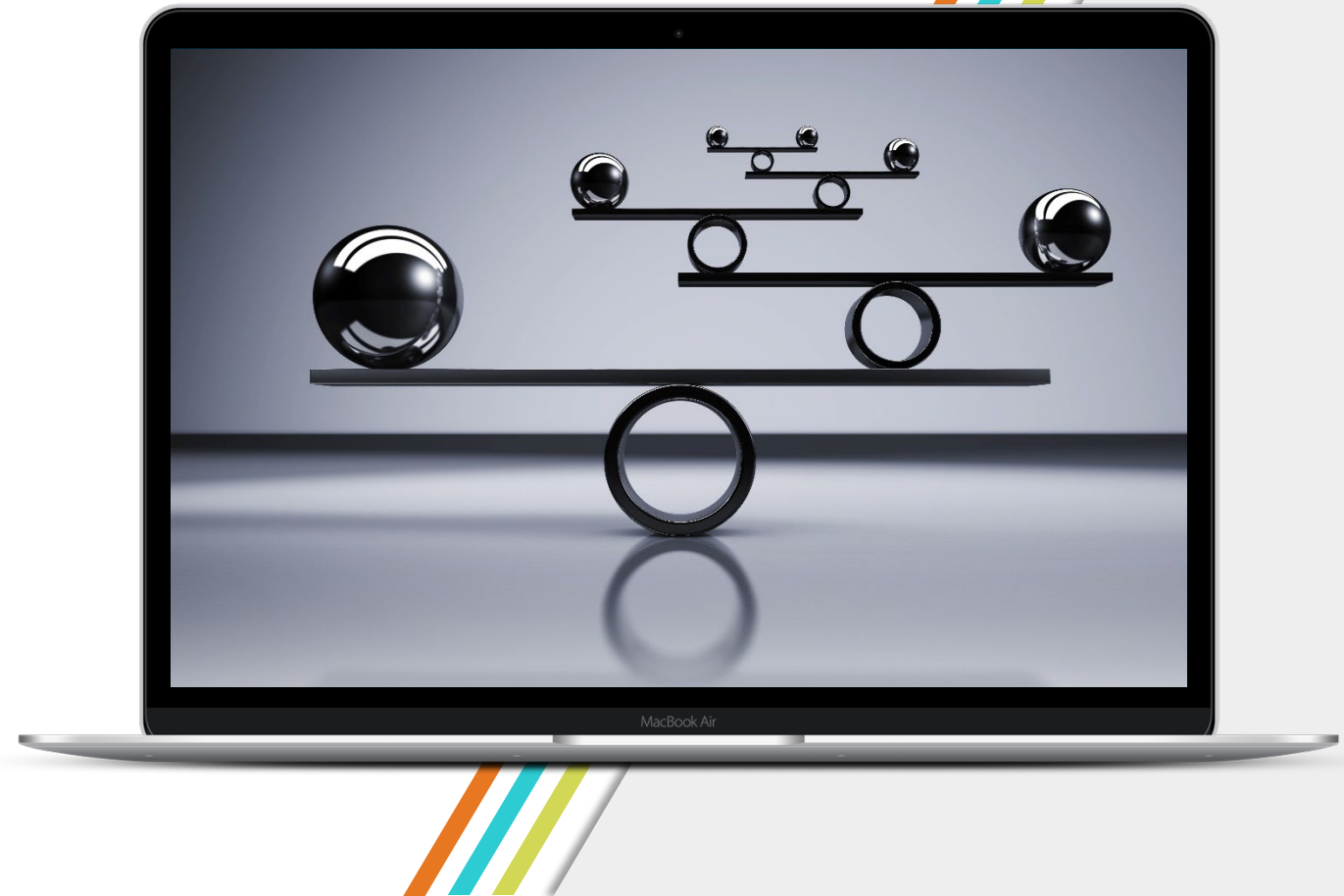


# Collaboration is Key



# Lots of Moving Parts

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





# Collaborative Legislation



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



# 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.



# The Department of Children's Services (DCS)



# Department of Children's Services

## Terms and Acronyms

- **CFTM** – Child and Family Team Meeting
- **FSW** – Family Service Worker is the DCS case manager
- **TFACTS** – Record keeping system for DCS
- **Educational Specialist** – Liaison between DCS and the school system; the primary point of contact for LEA foster care POC



# Department of Children's Services

- Who are the youth served by DCS?
- If a child is temporarily placed away from home, are they in state custody?
- How long are children in state custody or foster care?
- How frequently do children change placements?
- What is a trial home visit and how does it impact ESSA requirements?
- Who has the authority to make educational decisions?
- Who has the authority to make day-to-day decisions (attending field trips, dances, extracurricular activities)?





# Let's Share!

What barriers and challenges might exist when working with DCS?



# Responsibilities of the LEA





# Point of Contact Responsibilities

- Maintain agreement(s) between the LEA and DCS
- Identify students in foster care
- Coordinate and document BID meetings
- Coordinate and document transportation
- Remove barriers to ensure immediate enrollment
- Train all applicable staff



# Identifying Students in Foster Care



# Procedures for Identifying Students in Foster Care

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graph LR; A[DCS provides the list to the TDOE School Nutrition division.] --> B[The TDOE School Nutrition division provides the list to LEA contacts.]; B --> C[LEA contacts download the list from the server and match identifiers.];
```

DCS provides the list to the TDOE School Nutrition division.

The TDOE School Nutrition division provides the list to LEA contacts.

LEA contacts download the list from the server and match identifiers.



# Identification and BID Notification

- 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.





# **NEW: Education Passport and BID Notification**

- DCS is moving from one centralized point of notification.
- The Education Passport will be the primary method of notification of entry into foster care or change of foster care placement.
- Caseworkers should present the documentation at the time of enrollment or at the time of withdrawal. Both the school of origin and the school of zone should receive notification.
- DCS hopes to capture the BID prior to withdrawal.



# Best Interest Determination Meetings



# 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 conversation that must occur is a best interest determination (BID) meeting. This determines the student's placement.
- Schools are notified of new custodial placements with an Education Passport from DCS.
- Schools are responsible for arranging the BID meeting.



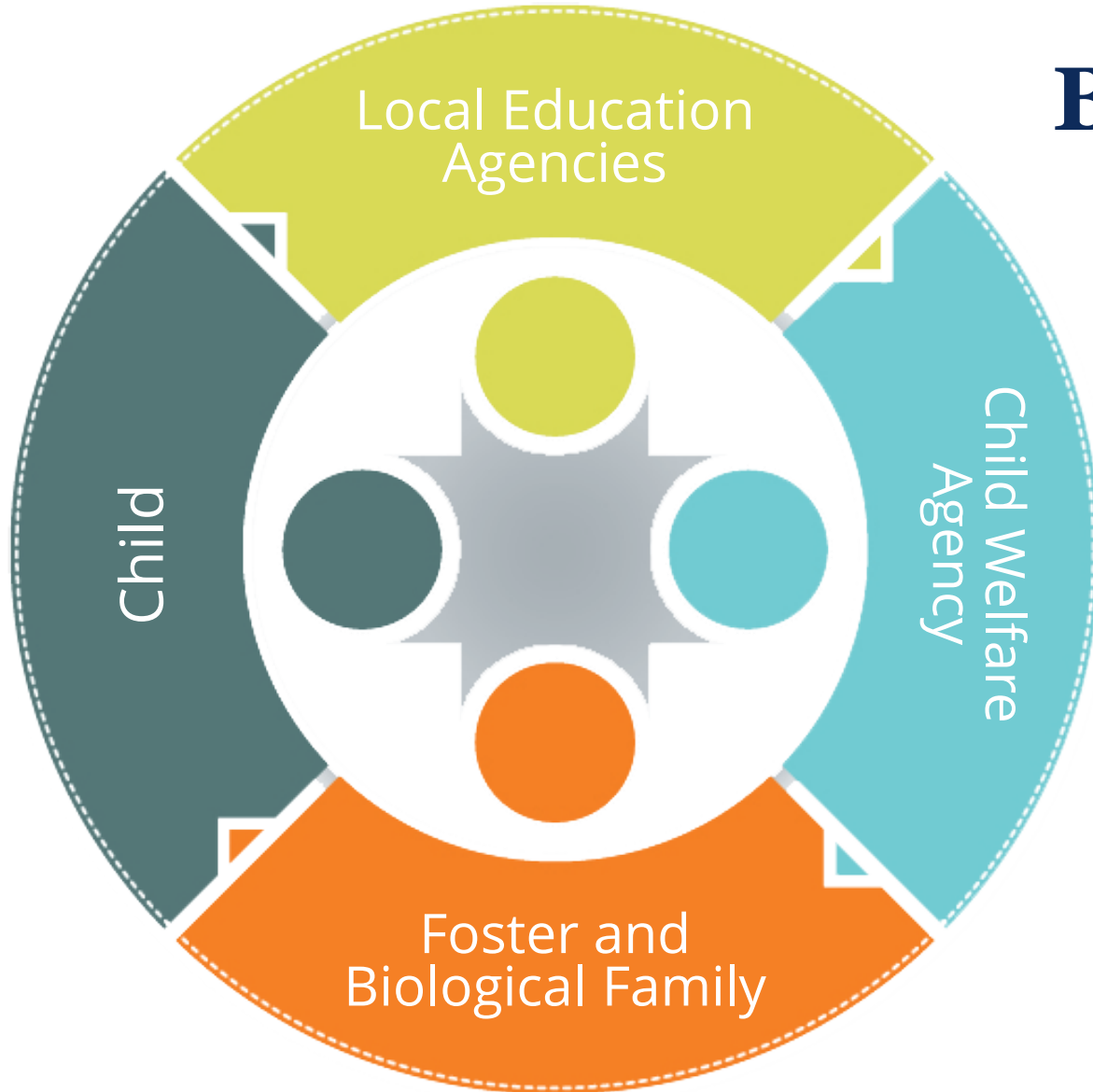
# Best Interest Determination Meetings

- BIDs are the heart of the school stability process.
- Conducting a quality and thoughtful BID can avoid future disputes that may arise.
- Requires 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

# Keep the Decision Child-Focused

- Elementary students:
  - Learning how to be students
  - Traumatized children have less-developed executive functioning and self-regulation skills
  - Ask the child what teachers say most often to gain insight into classroom behavior and connections
  - Gaps in knowledge may be wide



# Keep the Decision Child-Focused

- Middle school students:
  - Navigating more complex academic curriculum
  - Peer relationships and extracurricular activities are increasingly important
  - Loss of social support or clean slate?
  - Can the LEA ensure participation in all school activities?





# Keep the Decision Child-Focused

- High school students:
  - Less than one-third of students who change schools three or more times are expected to graduate within four years.
  - Consider graduation requirements and credits earned
  - Evaluate the transcript; involve school counselors
  - Consider how to maintain participation in extracurricular activities





# Timelines

- Upon a student entering custody or changing placement, the DCS Child and Family Team (CFT) will discuss the educational best interest of the child.
- If it is determined that the school of origin is in the best interest, the LEA will be notified by either the education specialist or through the case worker.
- The BID meeting should be held within **five days**.





# Timelines

- Once the BID meeting has been held and it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child, transportation is arranged.
- DCS will collaborate with the LEA to ensure the child receives transportation within **five days** of the BID meeting.
- DCS will provide transportation during the time prior to the BID meeting and for up to **five additional days** after the BID meeting is held.





# Let's Share!

What concerns do you have with the process to conduct BID meetings?



# 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 Social Security Act § 475(4)(A).
  - **Note:** Even if an LEA does not transport other students, it must ensure that transportation is provided to children in foster care.





# 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.



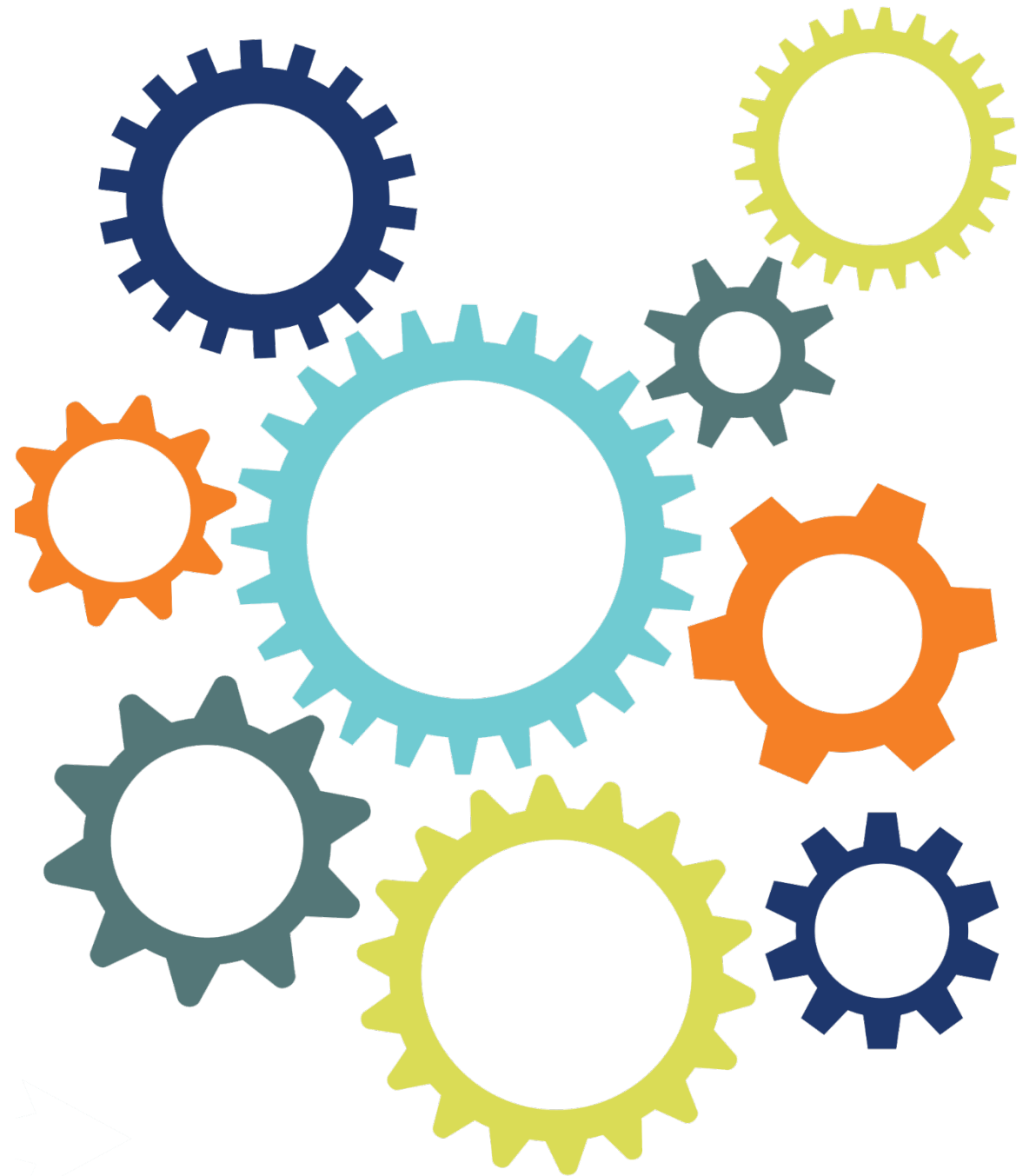
# Transportation

- Transportation is an allowable use of federal funds, both under the Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and Title I, of the ESEA.
- Transportation procedures should include a dispute resolution process if agreement cannot be reached.
- A child must remain in his or her school of origin while any disputes regarding transportation costs are being resolved, and transportation must be provided during this time.



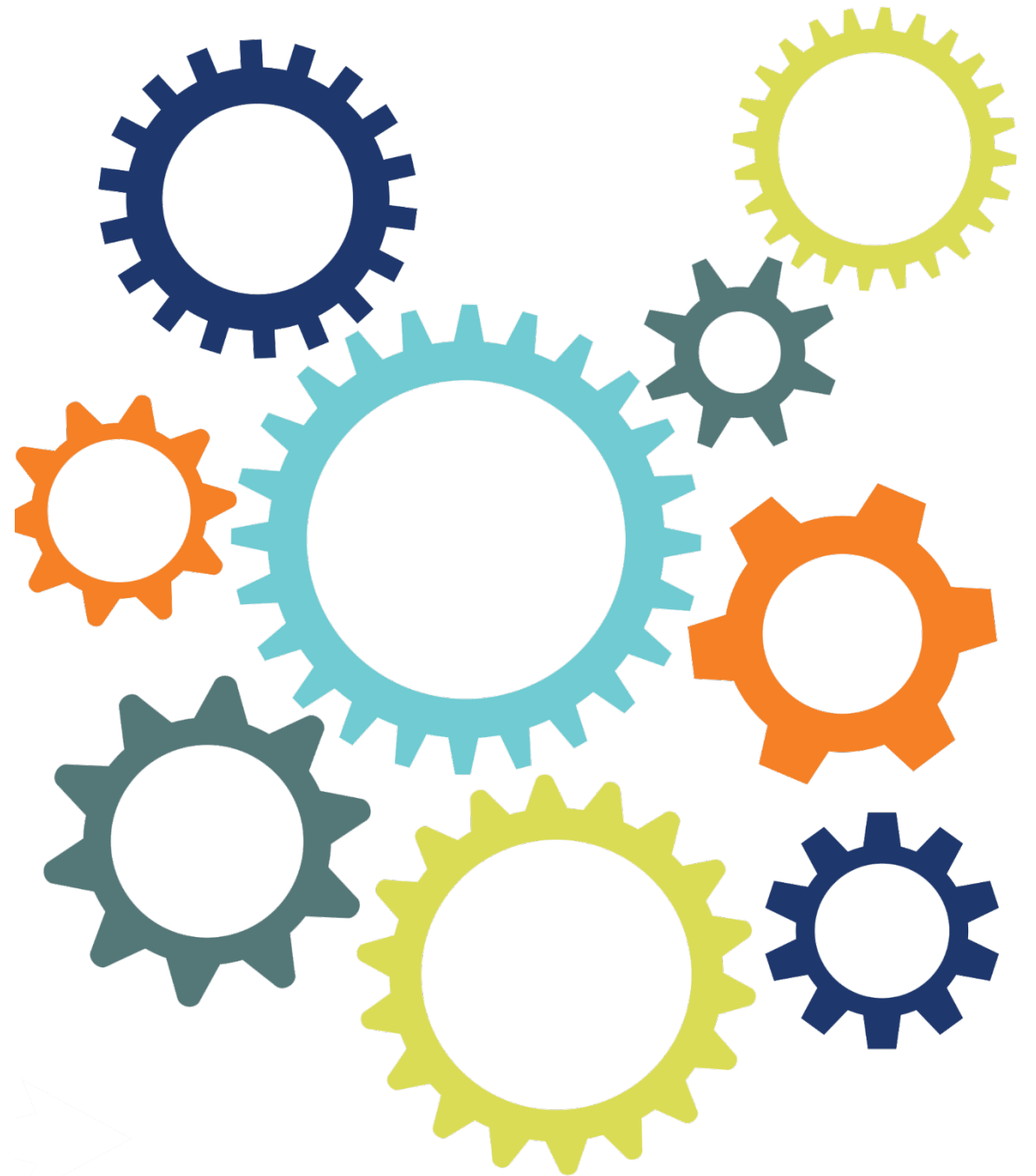
# Let's Discuss!

- 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

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SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

