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**Aspiranet**  
~August 2023~  
**Monthly Regulation Topic**

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**Back to School**

Transitions can be difficult for many of us, and the transition back to school can be especially difficult for children and youth in foster care who have experienced frequent school changes, inconsistent school attendance and challenges to keep up, as well as social and behavioral struggles at school. Consider the following to assist children in your care with their transition and success in school.

**Be in tune:**

Watch for potential signs your children are feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Signs may include difficulty sleeping, complaints of headaches, stomachaches, and behavior changes, such as irritability, impatience and temper tantrums. If you observe any of these in your child, trust your instincts and intervene as soon as possible. Approach your child with compassion and check in. Validate their feelings, even if they do not directly express them, let them know you're available to help. Discuss your observations and any concerns with your Aspiranet Social Worker.

**Ask questions - listen carefully:**

As school begins, ask open-ended questions about how things are going. Of course, these conversations will vary depending on the age of the children in your care. The goal with any child is to encourage them to share what is happening in their world. During these chats, listen actively and show empathy. Try to remember what it was like to be their age. Try to hold off with solutions right away, and reassure them that you understand their reactions and that it is okay to feel the way they do. Listen "between the lines" and pay attention to potential concerns or avoidance of certain topics or people, etc.

If your child seems "unmotivated" consider that there may be various reasons for this. As noted, it is not unusual for children in foster care to have academic, social and behavioral challenges in school. Children in foster care often struggle to feel accepted and be successful with coursework. Your child may be struggling with understanding the curriculum, may fear failing or may be feeling defeated by previous lack of success. They may also be having difficulties with peers, teachers or administrators. As a resource parent, it is important to understand the tensions and difficulties your child may be facing in order help remain focused on supporting your child and offering opportunities for building on their strengths at school, at home and in the community.

Let your child/youth know that you are available to talk, listen and help with any struggles they may be experiencing at school. Share your child struggles with their teacher as well as your Aspiranet Social Worker in order that supportive services can be explored, educational laws and support services specific to foster children can be considered, etc.

**Maintain Communication with the School:**

Children in foster care benefit greatly from resource parent advocacy and involvement. As a resource parent, you can support your child's success by having regular contact and communication with their school. Regular interactions with the teacher(s), whether in person, by phone or e-mail, are helpful to monitor your child's progress, both academically and emotionally. If your child seems stressed at home, ask the teacher(s) if they are seeing signs of stress or uncharacteristic behavior at school. Your child's teacher can provide valuable insight into how your child is coping during the school day. Likewise, it can be helpful to share with your child's teacher "need to know" information that may assist the teacher in supporting your child. To protect the your child's privacy and confidentiality, limit the information shared with the school to only the info that

is necessary for the school to provide appropriate education and/or behavioral services for the child. Please consult with your Aspiranet Social Worker before disclosing information about a child to the school.

Examples of info to share might include:

- child's strengths and challenges
- health condition requiring medication (i.e. inhaler for asthma)
- child's history and/or current functioning that is important to determining class placement, IEP goals, additional support services, etc.
- behavioral interventions being utilized at home that are shared for consistency between home and school.

Talk with your Aspiranet Social Worker about any school-related concerns, including the need for more educational support and/or advocacy for your child.

### **Helping Your Child(ren) to Communicate:**

Children in foster care may not want others to know about their current living situation or may be unsure how to handle direct questions. Talk with your child about how they want to handle possible questions and what they feel comfortable sharing. Help your child to develop a response to questions about their family and current living situation that they feel comfortable with.

### **Focus on the positive:**

Consider asking your children to share one positive thing that happened at school each day. Make a mental note of the details so you can refer back to it when they are struggling. Help your children to recognize the positives, from the simple, such as regularly remembering their backpack, to their strengths such as their writing or math skills, making new friends, etc. Practicing positive thinking helps to build resilience and the ability to better able to cope with frustration and disappointment.

### **Friendly Reminder - Resource Parent Responsibilities:**

As outlined in the Aspiranet Foster Parent Manual, the following are expectations for resource parents to best support the education of children in your care:

- Transport the child to/from school, when necessary.  
If bus service is not available or if walking to school is not safe, not developmentally appropriate, or a long distance, resource parents are to provide or arrange for transportation of children to school.
- Monitor your child's progress academically and school attendance
- Help with and check homework daily
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and other school events, meetings
- Advise your Aspiranet Social Worker of any school issues, conferences, progress reports and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings
- Participate, when appropriate, in assessment of your child for special education programs
- Provide a copy of your child's report card to Aspiranet Social Worker upon receiving
- Purchase needed school supplies & clothing:

Resource parents are to utilize the monthly Board and Care Reimbursement to purchase school supplies, including binders, paper, folders, pencils, pens, locks, etc. as well as needed clothing, including new school clothes and/or uniforms, P.E. clothes if applicable. Many schools provide a list of school supplies, which will help with narrowing the selection of needed items. In addition, Resource Parents are expected to pay for additional school expenses such as school pictures, items for school projects, yearbooks, senior trip, prom and graduation.

Please sign and return this page to your Aspiranet Social Worker for training credit. My signature below indicates that I have completed the August 2023 "Back to School Transition" training.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature Resource Parent #1*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Name Resource Parent #1*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature Resource Parent #2*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Name Resource Parent #2*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Aspiranet Authorized Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Training credit: \_\_\_\_ minutes