

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 10: Services

Item 010: Educational Travel Reimbursement

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA](#) Mailbox

Issued: **August 15, 2014**

References: Title IV-E of the Social Security Act-
Public Law ([PL 110-351](#)); All County Letter (ACL) [11-51](#) and [13-03](#); California Education Code 48853.5;
[Systems Information Bulletin C12-07](#)

Revisions in Red

Replaces Issue: PPG 03-04-012 dated
December 7, 2012

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Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

Policy

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will, whenever possible, allow children to continue to reside in their own neighborhoods and to remain in the *school of origin*. The *school of origin* means the school that the foster child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the foster child was last enrolled. This includes if the school the foster child attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the foster child was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that the foster child attended with which the foster child is connected and that the foster child attended within the immediately preceding 15 months. A dependent minor's case plan shall include a plan for ensuring the educational stability of the child while in foster care. This is called the Educational Stability Plan. The plan may include a reimbursement to the minor's care provider for the cost of *reasonable* travel to allow a child to remain in the school of origin, when it is in the best interest of the child. The DSS Child Welfare case managing social worker (CM SW) shall be responsible for the child's educational stability plan and for notifying the Eligibility Worker (EW) when the plan requires a reimbursement to the foster parent for Educational Travel, a change in reimbursement, or when the care provider is no longer eligible for reimbursement.

Reimbursement shall be based upon the rates communicated by the State thru [ACL 11-51](#). Educational Travel Reimbursement (ETR) shall be effective beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

Purpose

To inform DSS Child Welfare staff of the policy and procedure regarding the reimbursement of the cost of *reasonable* Educational Travel to care providers of minors in out of home care.

Procedure

Minors Eligible for **ETR**

ETR may be paid for Court Dependent children in Kindergarten through 12th grade in the following circumstances:

- When they remain in their *school of origin*- see [CA Education Code 48853.5\(e\)](#).
- When they have a change in placement.
- When they promote from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school, in accordance with the feeder patterns of school districts.

NOTE: If a child is enrolled in Special Education classes, the CM SW shall consult with the Educational Liaisons regarding available transportation prior to authorizing reimbursement payments.

Eligible Placement Facilities

- Licensed Foster Family Homes (FFH)
- Approved Relatives
- Small Family Homes
- Non-Relative Extended Family Members (NREFM)
- Foster homes certified through a Foster Family Agency (FFA)
 - **ETR** for certified homes will be paid directly to their associated FFA – no separate payment shall be made directly to the foster parent. The FFA is responsible for forwarding the appropriate reimbursement to the foster parent.
- **A Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP)**

NOTE – ETR is not available when child is placed in:

- A Group Home
- A Guardian Home, or
- A Community Treatment Facility
- **Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC)**

Rates Based on Mileage

The reimbursement rates were established per [ACL 11-51](#). The rate methodology was based on the foster parent or other designee driving four (4) one-way trips per day (one round trip from home to the school in the morning and one round trip from home to the school in the afternoon), fifteen school days per month, 180 school days per year divided by twelve months. Counties are not required to pro-rate payments for days children do not attend their school of origin.

Mileage reimbursement is based on the mileage for a one-way trip between the child’s placement home and the minor’s school. The rate shall not be prorated for days a child does not attend school, including summer, winter or spring breaks. Mileage rate verification will be based on data obtained from Google Maps.

Flat Rate Reimbursement Amounts (based on one-way mileage):

One-way mileage	Reimbursement Amount
Up to 3 miles	\$00.00
4 to 8 miles	\$58.00
9 to 13 miles	\$154.00
14 to 18 miles	\$250.00
19 to 23 miles	\$347.00
24 or more miles	\$443.00

Partial miles are rounded up if the miles are 0.5 and above or rounded down if the miles are less than 0.5. The rates reflected above are determined to be ongoing until the child changes schools or changes placement and are intended to be used for the cost of daily transportation to and from the school as well as for other educational-related transportation. Educational-related transportation includes: extra-curricular activities, sports related activities, school dances, after-school activities, as well as parent-teacher conferences and those instances when the care provider needs to travel to the school to pick up the child for appointments or illnesses.

Rates for Bus Passes

ETR may be paid for children taking public transportation to their school of origin. The DSS may purchase the bus pass or reimburse the foster parent for purchasing the pass. Bus passes are reimbursed at a flat rate. If the cost of the monthly bus passes falls between two levels, reimbursement to the provider will always be at the higher of the two levels.

Low cost	\$25.00
Medium cost	\$50.00
High cost	\$75.00

NOTE: A foster child may not receive both mileage and a bus pass for the same miles traveled, as part of their Educational Stability Plan. A foster child may, however, receive mileage as part of their Education Stability Plan and a bus pass through another program, when it is in the best interest of the child. The SW may also authorize mileage to a bus stop as part of the educational stability plan. In that

situation a payment may be authorized for both mileage and a public transportation pass when it is specified in the educational stability plan.

Responsibilities

New FFH and FFA Placements

When a minor is placed in his/her initial out-of-home placement, the care provider may request ETR to allow the child to continue attending his/her school of origin.

If the CM SW determines that ETR is appropriate and that the care provider is eligible, they will authorize ETR by emailing the [CWS FPR](#) mailbox. The CM SW must include in the email:

- The name and case number of the child
- The provider's name
- Effective end or change date, when appropriate
- Type of reimbursement authorized (mileage or bus pass)

If mileage reimbursement is authorized, the FPR SW will verify the actual number of miles from the care provider's home to the school of origin using Google Maps.

FPR SW is responsible to enter the ETR authorization **and** amount information provided into CWS/CMS to generate the SOC 158A. This information will also be documented in the FPR Child's Placement Contact Log.

FPR SW is responsible for submitting the completed SOC158A to Eligibility **via the** [ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox](#).

Newly Approved Relative/NREFM Placements

When a minor is placed in the home of a new Approved Relative/NREFM, the care provider may request ETR to allow the child to continue attending his/her school of origin.

If the CM SW approves the ETR it is to be documented on the [HAP](#) along with an explanation of why the child is not placed in proximity of school of origin. The [HAP](#) is to be emailed to the Home Approval Unit (HAU) SW for review.

The HAU SW is responsible to forward the completed HAP to the [HAP Notification](#) mailbox.

The HAU OA is responsible to process the [HAP](#) and enter the ETR information provided into CWS/CMS.

The HAU OA will verify the actual number of miles from the care provider's home to the school of origin using Google Maps.

The **HAU** OA shall include instructions to the EW regarding ETR in the Rationale Description section of the SOC 158A.

The **HAU** OA shall submit the SOC 158A to the HAU Social Work Supervisor (SWS) for review and signature.

The **HAU** SWS shall submit signed SOC 158A and SOC 815, Approval of Family Caregiver Home, to the drop basket located in the eligibility clerical support pool.

Ongoing Placements

When a child remains in his/her current placement and changes schools due to promotion, the care provider may request ETR. Another example of ETR authorization would be if the need was not identified or authorized at the time of initial placement.

If the CM SW determines that ETR is appropriate and that the care provider is eligible, they will complete the [Educational Travel Reimbursement \(ETR\) Authorization](#) (form CWS 0025) and email the form to the [CWS FPR](#) mailbox.

The “I” FPR SW will be responsible for checking the mailbox and processing these forms.

- If the ETR is for a relative, the “I” FPR SW will forward the email to the [HAP](#) mailbox for the HAU OA to process. The HAU OA will enter the information from the authorization form into CWS/CMS and create a new SOC158A and submit it to Eligibility **via the** [ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox](#).
- For all other placement types the “I” FPR SW will enter the information from the authorization form into CWS/CMS and create a new SOC158A and submit it to Eligibility **via the** [ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox](#).

FFH/FFA Change in Placements

When a subsequent change of placement occurs, the new care provider may request ETR to allow the child to continue attending his/her school of origin.

If the CM SW determines that ETR is appropriate and that the care provider is eligible, they will authorize ETR by emailing the [CWS FPR](#) mailbox. The CM SW must include in the email:

- The name and case number of the child
- The provider’s name
- Effective end or change date, when appropriate
- Type of reimbursement (mileage or bus pass)

If mileage reimbursement is authorized, the FPR SW will verify the actual number of miles from the care provider’s home to the school of origin using Google Maps.

FPR SW is responsible to enter the ETR authorization **and** amount information provided into CWS/CMS to generate the SOC 158A, this information will also be documented in the FPR Child's Placement Contact Log.

FPR SW is responsible to submit the completed SOC158A to Eligibility **via the [ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox](#)**.

Additional Payment End Reason

Whenever there is any type of change in a child's placement and/or educational setting, the CM SW shall determine whether or not the ETR shall continue or be modified. Reasons why an ETR should be ended or modified include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

- Child AWOL/Abducted
- Child's educational needs changed
- Child's placement changed
- Child moved to a new home within the same FFA
- Child's care provider moved to a different address
- Child changed schools due to promotion
- Child graduated
- Child returned home to parent or guardian

If it is determined that the ETR should be ended or modified, the CM SW shall email Foster Care Eligibility staff via the [ETA Foster Care Placement mailbox](#) within one business day. The CM SW shall also end date the additional payment within CWS/CMS and select one of the following reasons:

- AWOL/Abducted
- Educational Needs Changed
- Placement Change
- Promoted/Graduated
- Returned Home
- Other

Completion of the SOC 158A

It is the responsibility of the FPR SW, FPR OA, HAU OA and the CM SW in their respective role, to create and or update the **Placement Notebook ID page** in CWS/CMS. Pertinent information entered on the ID page will then populate into the minor's Health and Education Passport (HEP) and will produce a SOC158A.

The "**Rational**" section on the ID page shall be completed with the following steps:

- Select "*Approved Homes: This home is suited to the child's needs*";
- Enter a clear and concise statement regarding the placement in the "*Rationale Description*"

For mileage reimbursement, the Rationale Description shall include:

- The type of payment (Educational Travel Reimbursement) entered as an 'Additional Rate' (previously called a Specialized Care Increment)
- Effective start date
- Effective end or change date, when appropriate
- Number of miles to the school of origin
- Dollar amount of the mileage rate
 - Example: (mileage; start: mm/dd/yyyy; 4-8 Mi. @ \$58.00)

For a Bus Pass, the Rationale Description shall include:

- Effective start date
- Effective end or change date, when appropriate
- Whether the child is in a high, medium or low cost area
- Dollar amount of the public transportation pass rate
 - Example: (bus pass; start: mm/dd/yyyy; Medium @ \$50.00)

Complete the drop down section: "*Attends the same school as prior to placement*" by choosing Yes, No, N/A or UNK, as appropriate.

Check the box that states, "*Considered proximity to the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement*".

A complete and detailed explanation shall be entered in the area labeled, "Explanation if the child was not placed in proximity of school" (populates into the HEP).

Documentation

See [System Information Bulletin \(SIB\) C12-07](#), *CWS/CMS Release 6.7*, dated 11-5-2012 for step-by-step instructions on documenting the **ETR** in CWS/CMS.