



DCF Education Unit

DCF's Education Specialty Unit

Youth Ages 3-22

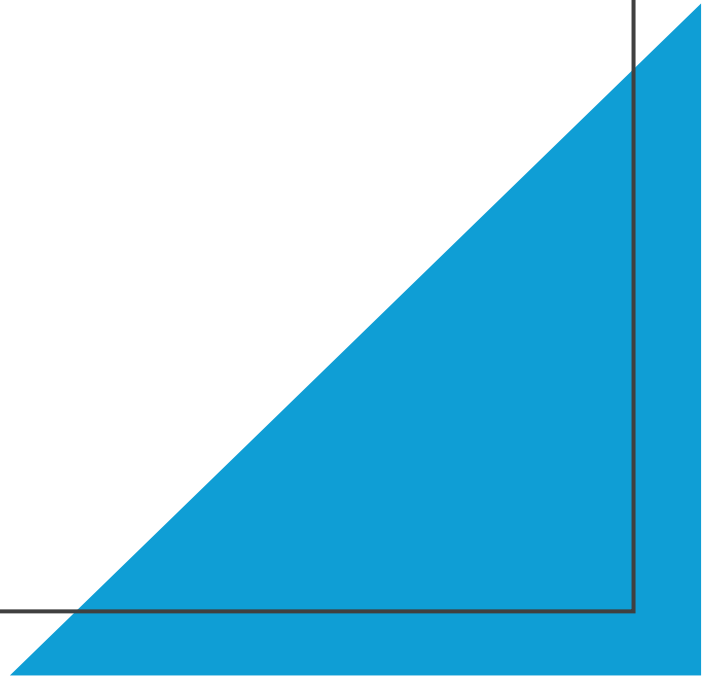
Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner of Program Support

Sarah Brooks, Education Director

Outline for Today:

- DCF Education Overview
 - DCF Education Responsibilities
 - Education Data Sharing
 - Youth Returning or Transitioning into DCF Placements
 - DCF Legal Education Attorney Referral Program
 - Additional Information
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DCF's Education Overview



DCF Education Policy Update; Education Legal Referral Program was repocured and reintroduced to DCF staff

2021

AILT group for education: EWIS data sharing between DESE and DCF to identify youth at risk for not graduating

2023

Education Unit streamlined education completion risk categories K-12 within our regional work with clinical teams; tracking largest school districts for youth in care for proactive collaboration: identifying youth entering care to follow up for notifying schools; Non-Regulatory Guidance was introduced

2025

DCF Education Specialist Positions created and filled for each region

2022

Over 400 EWIS consultations were completed in efforts to support graduation requirements by the end of the school year; DESE/DCF Education Stability Team expanded for highly mobile students

2024

Education Unit continues to work on data driven work including identifying our most mobile youth in care; graduation and credit barriers for youth

2026





EDUCATION SUPPORT AT DCF

SARAH BROOKS

Education Director

Southern Region

JANET DUNCAN

Education Specialist

Boston Region

KATHY MONAHAN

Education Specialist

Central Region

DAVEAN WILSON

Education Specialist

Western Region

YVETTE CAMMOCK

Education Specialist

Northern Region

KAREN COLLINS

Education Specialist

Each Area Office has an Education Coordinator within their Lead Agency for youth in Lead Agency Placement

KERRI AMARAL

Cape & Islands/JRI

DEB DICKENSON

MAYA SANCHEZ
Hyde Park/CFP

MARIANNE MBIYU

North Central/LUK

APRIL NUTTING

Berkshire/18 Degrees

STEPHANIE SABULIS

Cape Ann/Lahey

DONNA GIBSON

Plymouth/JRI

GERMAINE RODRIGUEZ

Park Street/CFP

TINA BROUILLETTE-SMITH

South Central/Wayside

AARON PIZILIA

Greenfield/18 Degrees

LIANE MCNAMARA

Lawrence/The Key Program

LYNN ADAMS

New Bedford/JRI

MADELINE GUEVARA

Jackson Square
Roxbury Youth

MARIA ELIZA RODRIGUEZ

Worcester East/Wayside

ASHLEY PAIER

Springfield/The Key Program

EMILY BAILEY

Lynn/Lahey

KATIE OLLMAN

Fall River/JRI

LAURA ANDREANI

Harbor/CFP

ERIN CRAWFORD

Worcester West/You, Inc.

SARAH BERNSTEIN

Van Wart/The Key Program

ASHLEY PLUMMER

Haverhill/Eliot CHS

KATHERINE SCIESZKA

Brockton/JRI

CAITLIN SULLIVAN

Framingham/Wayside

STEPHANIE INGLE

Holyoke/The Key Program

EMMA CANNISTRARO

Grt. Lowell/Eliot CHS

KRISTIN TOUCHETTE

Taunton/JRI

PAUL CROWLEY

Cambridge/Riverside

ALYSON HAYES

Coastal/Baystate

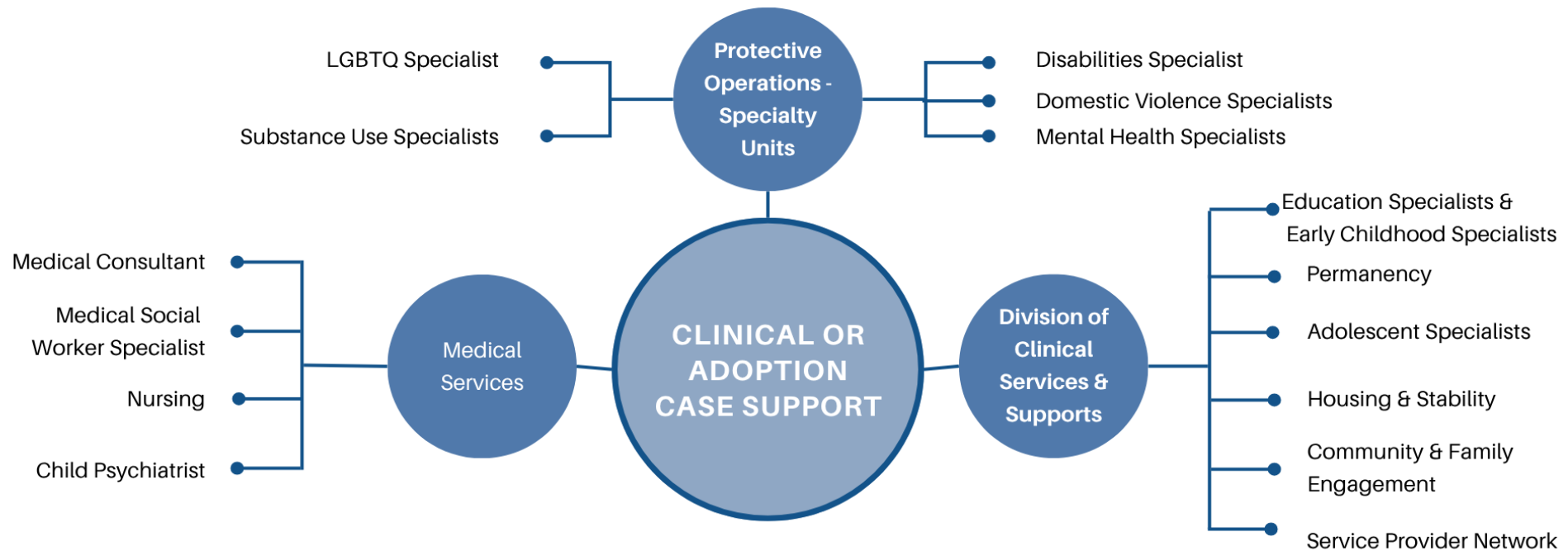
JEFF STRASNIK

Metro North/Wayside

ALLANNAH ANDRADE

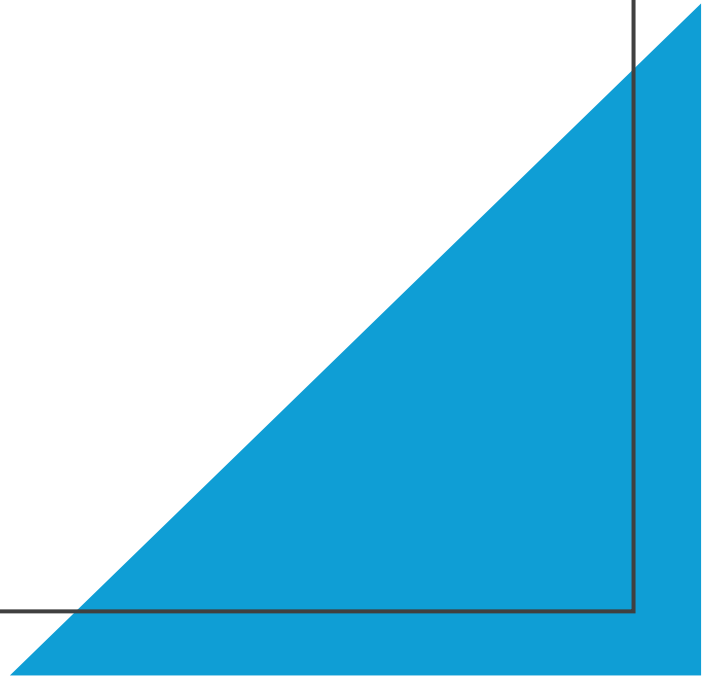
Greater Waltham/Wayside

DCF Regional Support Specialists



- The system of support specialists to consult within DCF is vast and speaks to the varying needs of youth and families that we serve.
- The Education Unit frequently does combined consultations with other support specialists to meet the needs and complexities of overlapping work.

Educational Responsibilities



Case Responsibilities for Education



School Communication

Regular updates on school enrollment, attendance and progress.



Gathering and Documenting

Gathering and documenting youth's educational data and adding it to the demographics in Ifamily Net



DCF Placement Updates

Informing school districts about placement changes for children through Notice to Schools.



Education Specialist Meetings

Collaborative meetings with Education Specialists as needed.



Best Interest Determinations

Collaborating with stakeholders for BIDs for youth in care.



Special Education Referrals

Referring children for special education evaluations and services when needed.

Education Support for Youth at Home



Confirm Enrollment

Verify child's enrollment in a qualified school program.



Obtaining Information

Gathering educational and developmental information including IEPs and 504s.



★ Verifying Progress

Check on attendance, behavior and academic progress.
*Update 1x monthly



Providing Support

Offering guidance and resources to parents and families.
*Who should they contact in their district when...



Consult Specialists

Seek expert advice for additional support. Consider attendance, conduct/discipline, academic progress/grades



Develop Plan

Create plan to address difficulties. Examples of offering support: Requesting Special Ed. Evals, FRC, Ed. Coordinators, Ed. Specialists, Legal Ed. Attorneys

- 79% of youth served are home.

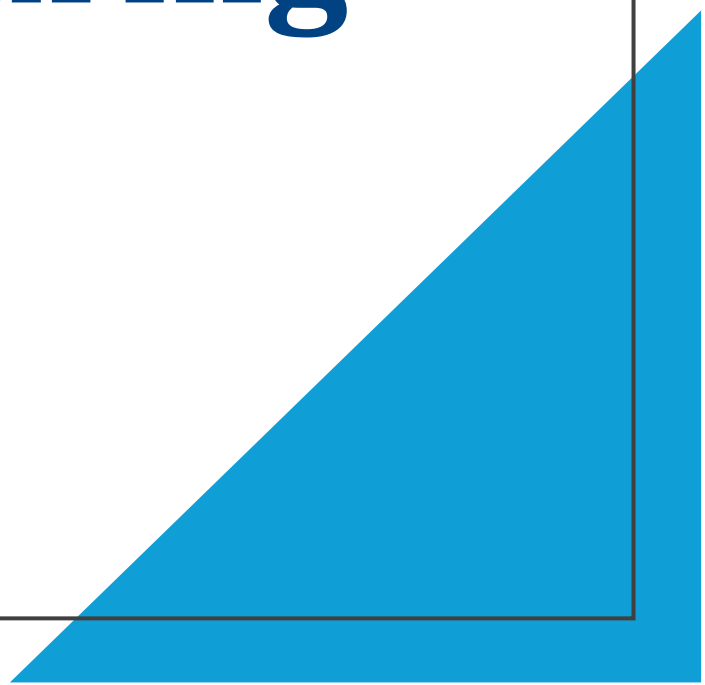
★ If we have a release to speak with the school, it is important to get updates on progress monthly from school (per policy).

- If we do not have a release, the only updates on progress that we can get is through the family/caregiver.

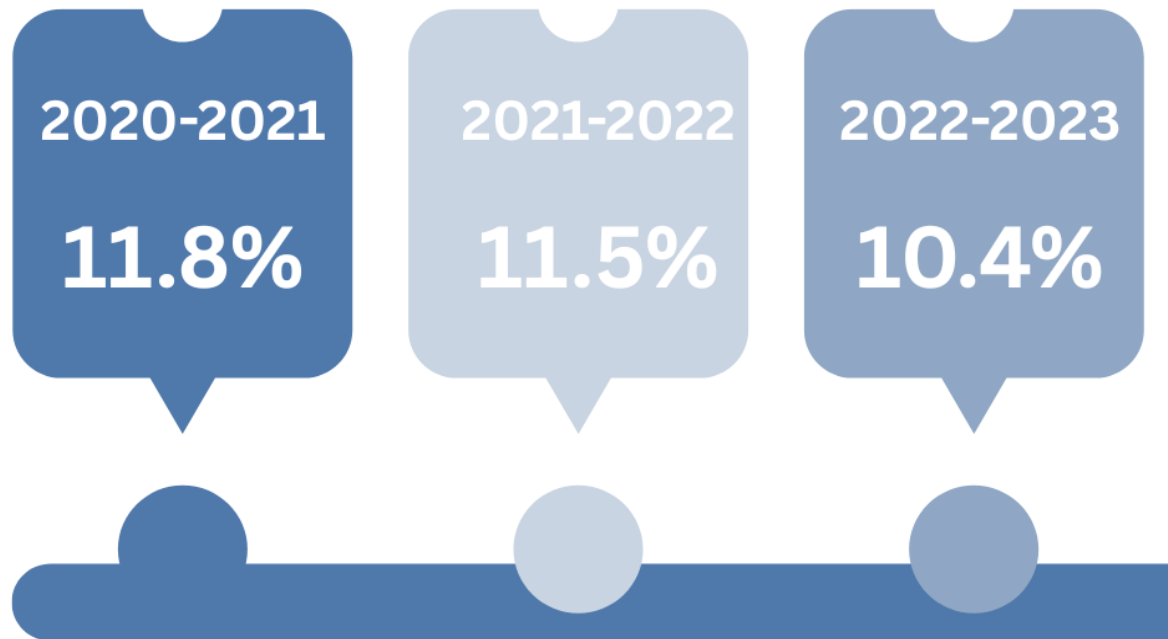
Education Support for Youth in Custody

1	Monthly Contact with Education Providers Social Worker maintains regular communication with schools.	6	Update Placement Information Social Worker informs the district of any placement changes through Notice to School District and participate in Best Interest Decisions
2	Address Educational Issues Social Worker intervenes for attendance, discipline, or performance problems.	7	Assess and Document Progress Social Worker records the child's educational achievements.
3	Gather Information Social Worker collects education documents such as IEPs and 504s and uploads them into Demographics under Education. Other documents like assessments, evaluations, and report cards are also uploaded into electronic documents.	8	Develop Action Plans Social Worker creates plans to address educational obstacles. When Social Worker needs support in education obstacles they can request consultations with Education Specialists or Education Coordinators if youth are in LEAD Agency placements
4	Access Online System Social Worker gains access to the school district's online portal. This portal can provide Social Worker with attendance, conduct reports, and grades.	9	Document Activities Social Worker maintains detailed records of all educational activities.
5	Monitor Educational Progress Social Worker tracks attendance, academic progress, and discipline.	10	Review Educational Needs Social Worker reviews needs and arranges transportation for the new school year with the assistance of school districts.

Education Data Sharing

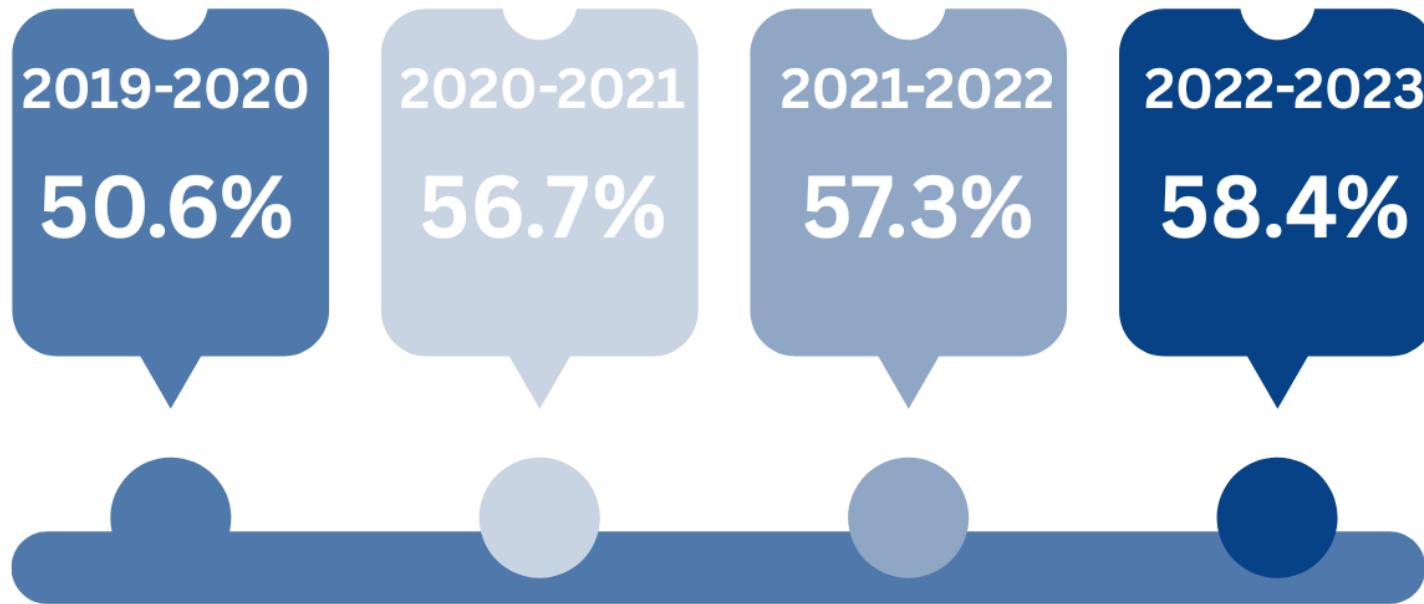


Discipline Rates



- Our out of school suspension rates have been an area that we would like to connect more explicitly within our education stability work with DESE.
- We are offering support on an individual basis through the utilization of education consultation and education attorney referral program for discipline.

Graduation Rates



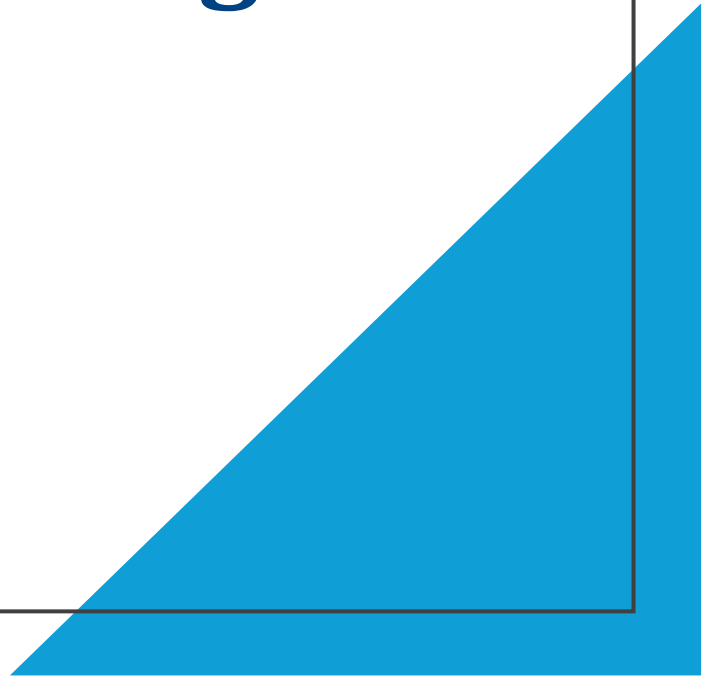
- We are utilizing DESE's Early Warning Indicator System to alert us to graduation target risks when a youth comes into care.
- We are also asking for more explicit conversations about local graduation requirements and grading policies during best interest determination communications.

Special Education Youth In DCF Placement

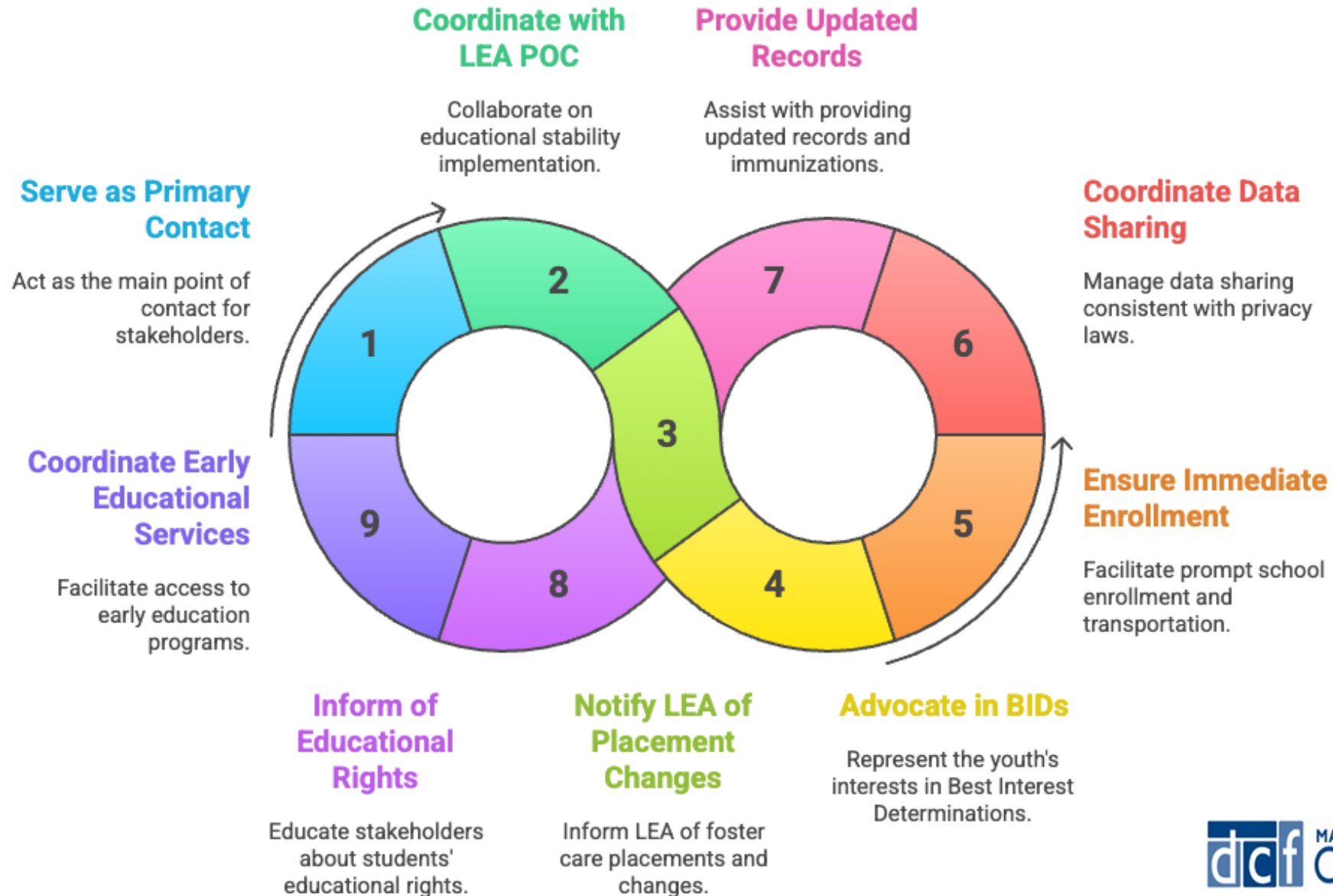
- The number of youth in DCF placement with special education services has only slightly increased over the last 4 years
- Of the qualifying disabilities, the most recent largest population of disabilities of our youth are represented in the visual.



Youth Returning or Transitioning into DCF Placement



Education Tasks when a Youth enters Care



Best Interest Determination:

Mandated in the Federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to promote educational stability for students in foster care.

When a student in DCF custody moves from one placement to another a **Best Interest Discussion (BID)** must be held to determine :

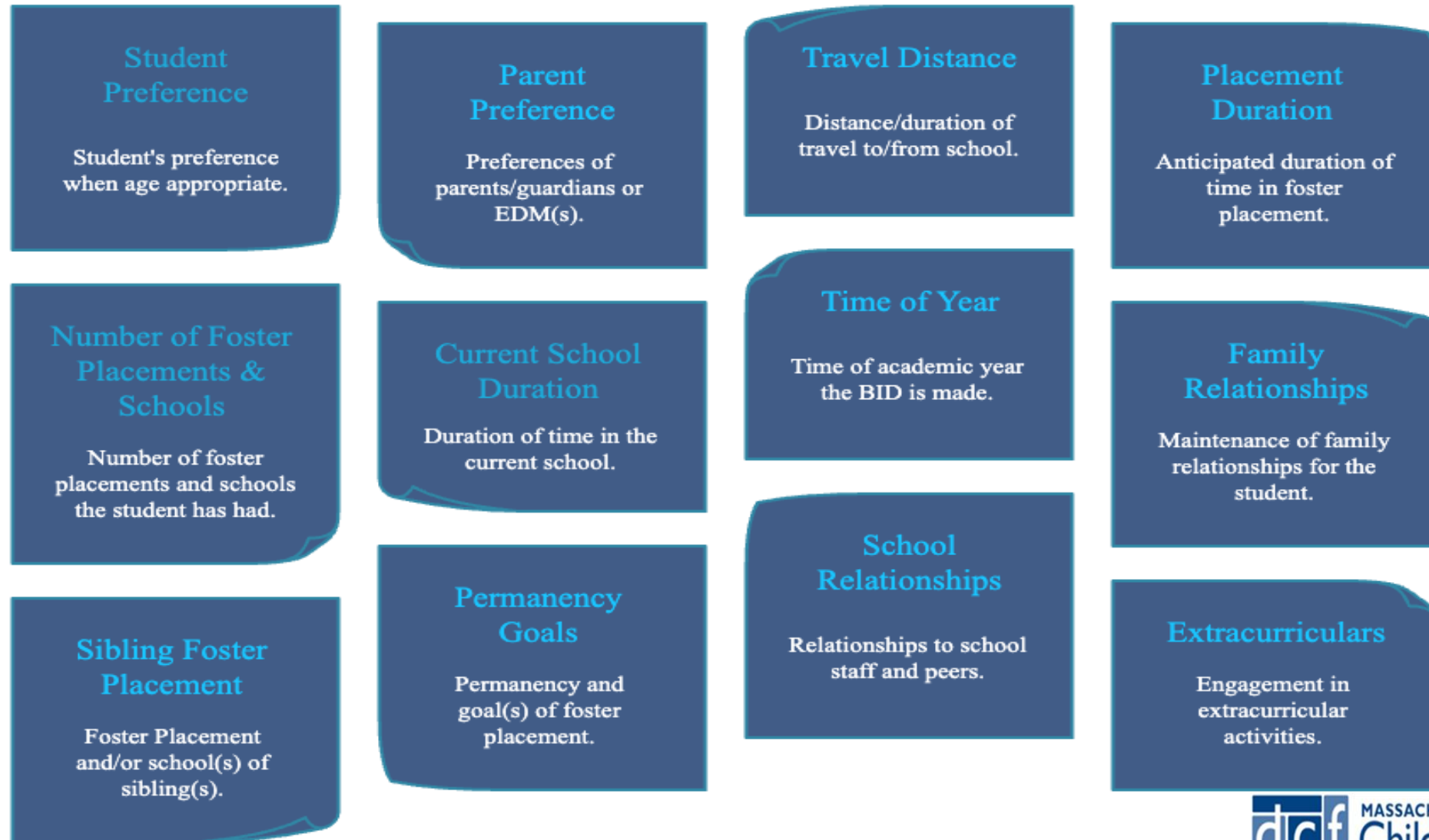
Whether the student will attend their "school or origin" (the school they presently attend)

OR

Whether the student will be registered locally in the school district where they are now living.

The law presumes that students should remain enrolled in their school of origin, unless, after a best interest determination, it is decided to be in their best interest not to.

Best Interest Determination: Considerations



Best Interest Determination: Information Sharing

Best Interest Factor	DCF	School of Origin	New School District
Student Preferences	Report out	Report out	
Parent/EDM's Preferences	Report out		
Connection to School	Report out	Report out	
Extracurricular Activities		Report out	Reports comparable activities
Sibling School Connection	Report on	Report on	
School Climate	Report on	Report on	
School Transfer/Membership History		Report on known history	
Commute Impact	Give feedback	Give feedback	Give feedback
Time of Year, Grading, Term Closing	Speak to placement	Speak to timing	district
Reunification/Permanency Plan	Report on goal		
Student's Needs	Report out	Report out	
English Learner Status		Report on status	

In order to work collaboratively, each team (DCF and School of Origin) should be prepared to share about the areas that they are connected to and for a new school district to be able to ask follow up questions on those factors.

We typically go into a BID with an idea of what we think is in the best interest of the youth. Its just important to know that we can change our mind and be open to hearing differing opinions if a school has important information.

Legal Education Attorney Referral Program



Education Legal Service Referral Requests

What it is:

When there are concerns about the child's education, DCF has contracts with private education attorneys to represent

- Biological parents
- Guardians
- Foster parents
- Special Education Surrogate Parents

Why its a resource:

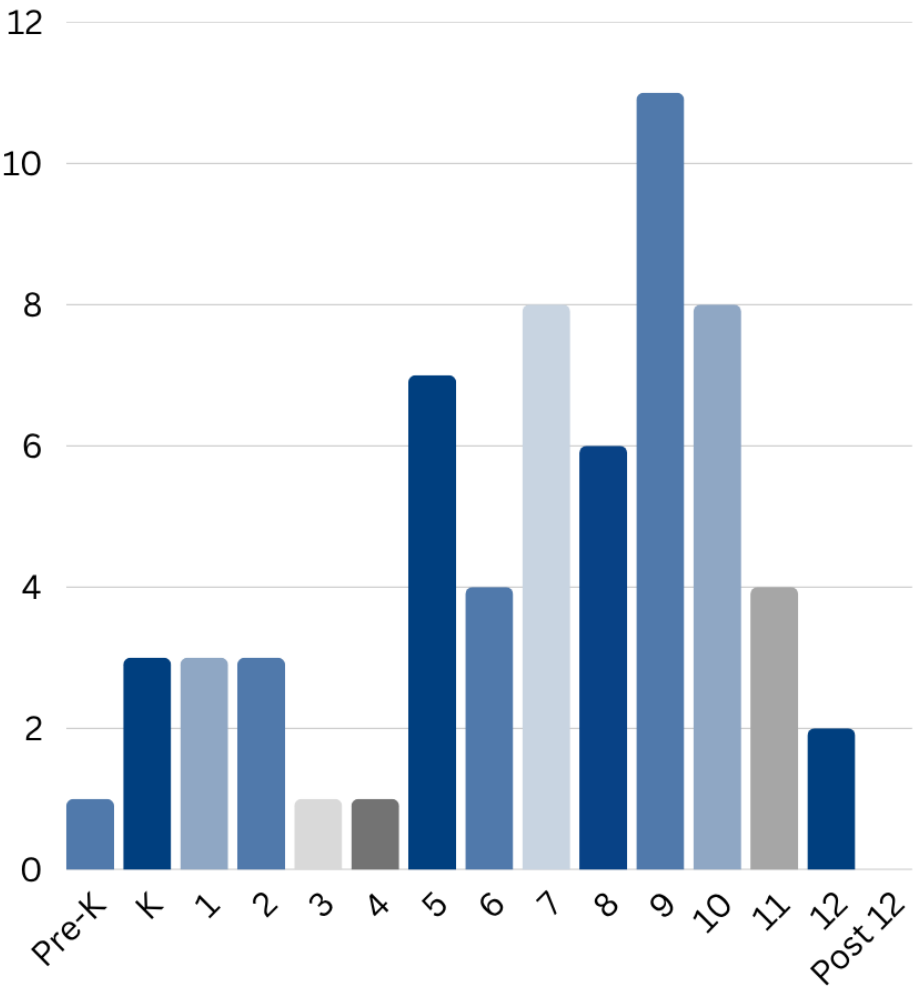
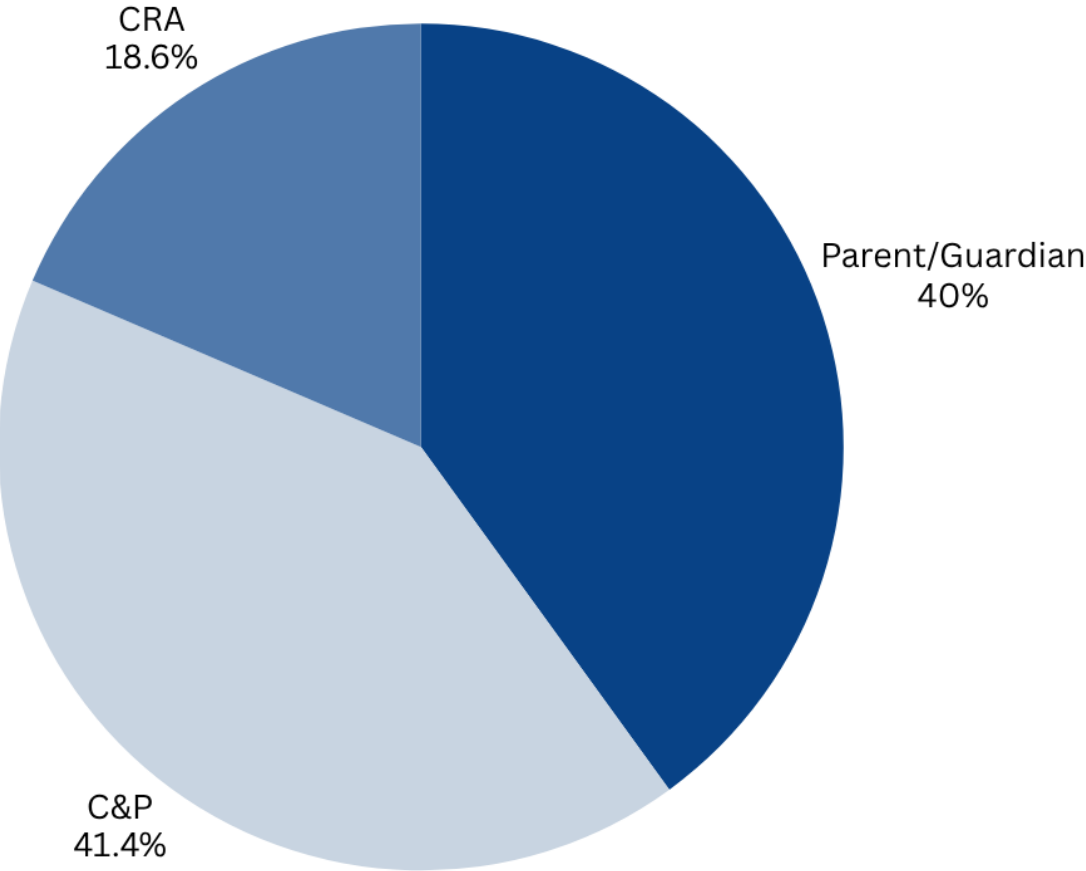
- When Department staff or parents want a **consult** with an attorney to discuss the child's rights, options or next steps.
- When a child has disabilities and there are disputes about the **proper or best special education services** to which the child is entitled.
- When a child is facing **discipline issues** such as frequent suspension or expulsion.

Education Legal Service Referral Requests Continued

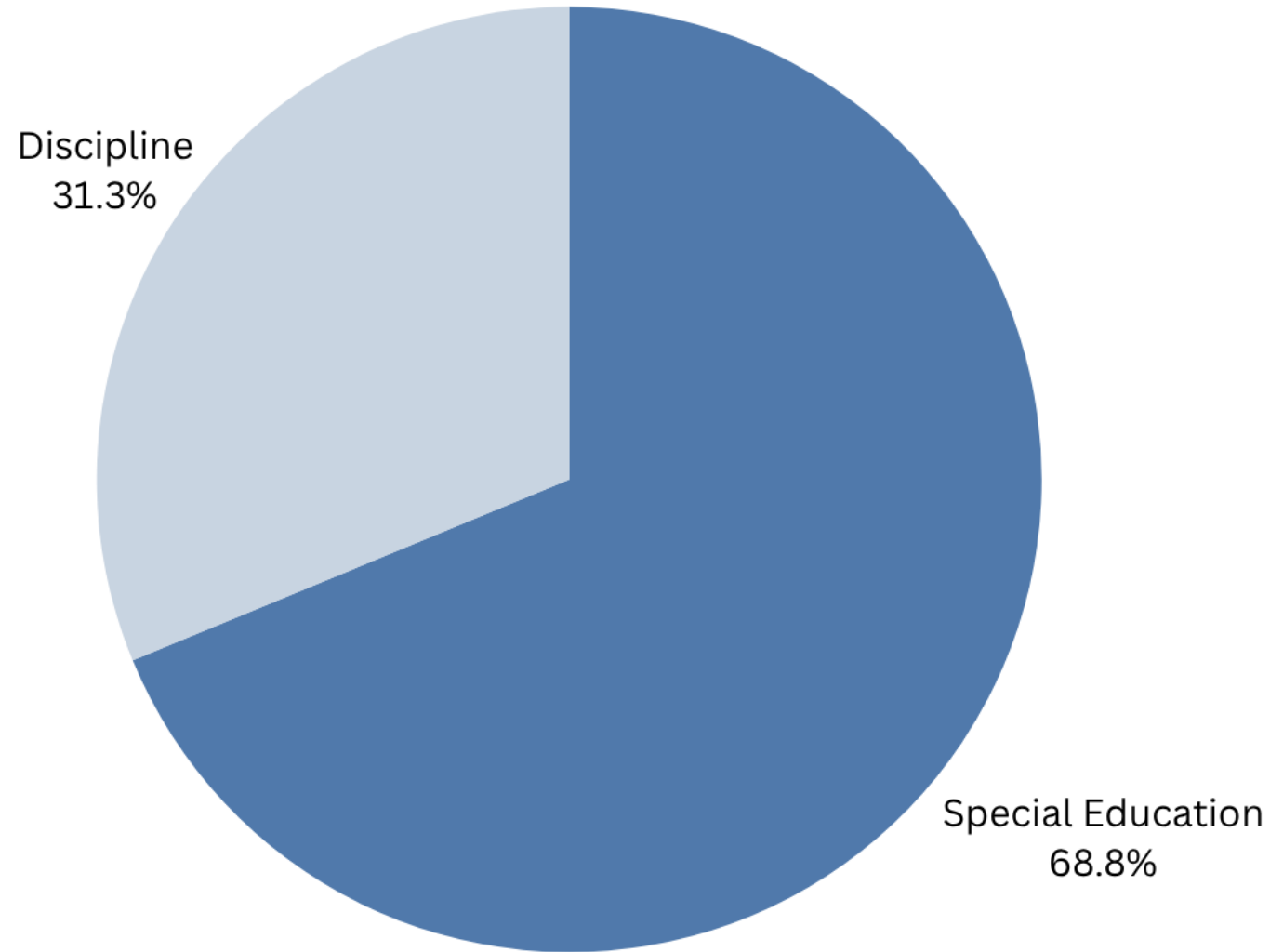
Who can use it:

- This service is available for any child with an open case with DCF.
- DCF custody is not an eligibility requirement.
- The child's Education Decision Maker (who would be the one represented by the lawyer) must be interested in the service and sign the referral form, in addition to the Area Director.

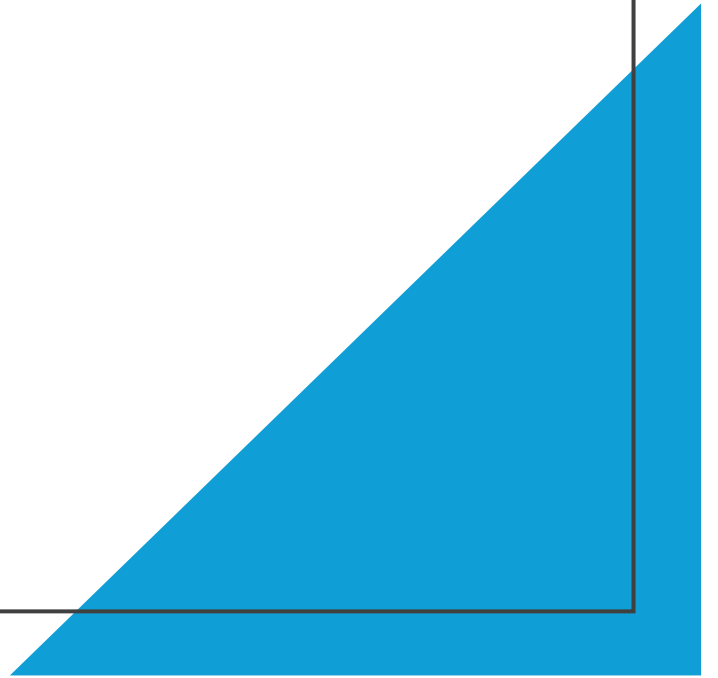
Education Legal Service Custody & Grades



Education Legal Service Reasons for Referral



Other Information to Note



2024 New Non-Regulatory Guidance Updates



Expanded Definition

Educational stability protections now apply to youth returning home during trial reunifications.



Specific Timelines

Best practice timelines are established for BIDs, records transfer, enrollment, and dispute resolution.



Transportation

The guidance encourages annual reviews, and promotes the usage of school transportation for pre/post day extracurriculars.



Foster Care Transition

School of origin protections apply to feeder school patterns for students in foster care.

DCF Education Priorities

Education Stability and Success for the youth that we all serve

- Increasing our Data Driven Work
 - Foster care highly populated districts
 - Early Warning Risk Indicator
 - Attendance (SIMS Data)
 - Discipline (SSDR Data)
 - Credit Accrual/Retention (EWIS)
 - School Moves (TBD)
 - Graduation Requirements/MassCore Requirements (EWIS)

Policy, Guidance, Training Resources

- [DCF Education Policy, 2021](#)
- [BID Resource and Note Taker](#)
- [ESSA](#)
- [MA Joint Guidance from DCF and DESE](#)
- [Non-Regulatory Guidance 2024](#)

Education Training Feedback Form:

