

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY CHECKLIST

A student’s academic potential should not be limited by his/her experience in care. This checklist provides a structure for CASA to ensure educational stability and successful outcomes for children and youth. When appropriate, the child/youth must be engaged in the decision-making process.

For all students, CASA should:	Yes or No
Birth to 3 years old	
Encourage the caregiver to read to the child daily.	
Connect the caregiver to local library resources to encourage socialization, cognitive and language and literacy development.	
3 years old to Kindergarten	
Encourage the caregiver to read to the child daily.	
Connect the caregiver to local library resources to encourage socialization, cognitive and language and literacy development.	
Recommend that pre-school aged children are enrolled in an early childhood education program such as Preschool For All, Early Head Start and/or Head Start program.	
High School Students	
Ensure that high-school aged students are aware of post-secondary education options and has support completing applications, financial aid, and entrance exams.	
All Students	
Request that the student remain in his school of origin if it is in the best interest of the child (Each time a child/youth in care changes school they regress an average of 4-6 months).	
Advocate for fewer placements and identify any logistical barriers to enrollment (timing, distance, transportation, special education plans).	
If the student must switch schools, help ensure he is immediately enrolled and that school records are transferred. Local Education Agencies are required to immediately enroll a student who is in the physical or legal custody of DCFS or DJJ. A written request for the transfer of the student’s school records is made at the time of enrollment.	
Ensure the child/youth has the appropriate school supplies (e.g., books, Chromebook, writing utensils, backpack etc.).	
Review the school handbook with the student, if age appropriate, including attendance and behavioral conduct policies.	
Determine whether DCFS has any educational services in place for the child or if implementation is needed (IEP’s or Section 504 plan).	
Connect students with special education assessments as needed, if one is not established and the child/youth has a need	
Advocate for the child’s participation in extracurricular activities to increase school engagement and connectedness.	
Consult with the student regarding whether there are any issues about school performance, relationships, or other education needs or requests.	
Provide the court with detailed education-related information and recommendations in the CASA court report.	

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Verify that class credits transfer, transcripts and IEP’s or Section 504 plans to avoid any duplication or graduation delays.	
If there is a challenge with a credit transfer, contact the counselor/teacher to provide additional options for the child/youth to receive credit. This is crucial for timely high school graduation.	
Consider whether the student is in the most appropriate school setting and whether an alternative school setting, or online credit recovery would be beneficial.	
Verify student’s attendance and number of absences to rule out and identify reasons for chronic absenteeism and truancy. Lack of attendance is typically	
Determine whether the student exhibits any behavioral issues in school and whether it has led to outside school suspension.	
Contact the student’s teachers and counselors and help identify problems related to attendance as needed and help identify solutions by connecting the guardians to community resources	
Consider if the student is performing at grade level and has satisfactory grades. If not, identify resources to support the child via tutoring, after school programs, or study buddy system	
Identify students that are high-achieving and ensure they are enrolled in honors or advanced placement classes.	
For older youth, ensure a transitional plan for post-secondary education, employment and independent living.	
Collaborate with foster parents, caseworker, and school administration to facilitate student educational success	

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Special Education Advocacy Checklist

For all students, CASA should:	Yes or No
Children in care born with prenatal drug exposure or substance abuse withdrawal should be referred for early intervention evaluation.	
Does the child/youth have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan and if so, is it updated yearly?	
Does the child/youth need to be assessed for an IEP or Section 504 Plan?	
Is the student educated in the least restrictive environment? If no, why? How can we help?	
*If the student has recently transferred schools, does the new school have the IEP/504 Plan?	
Are the accommodations and/or modifications been successful for the student? If not, why?	
Are the services provided to the student beneficial?	
Ensure that the child/youth are not placed in special education classes inappropriately. Perhaps the student needs tutoring services or summer recovery program.	
A conscious effort should be made to include students in extracurricular activities to enhance school connectedness.	
Ensure that transitional services for students with disabilities begin at age 14 ½. Special education services are available to age 21.	
If the school fails to complete an evaluation for special education, request that the caseworker order an external assessment.	
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