



COVID-19 School Closures & Students in Foster Care

This resource was last updated on May 13, 2020. Some information may have changed.

- 1. You Can Continue Your Education While Schools Are Closed:** You can stay in your current school or enroll in a new school closer to where you are staying immediately without providing any enrollment documents—whichever is best for you. Your current school will hold a “Best Interest Determination” to help decide which school is best for you. [Learn more here.](#)
- 2. There Are People Who Can Help You:** Every school district and charter school has a Foster Care Point of Contact (POC) to support students who are in foster care. Use this [link](#) to find out who this person is at your school. Every county children and youth office also has an [Education Liaison](#) who can help you.
- 3. You Have a Right to Free Meals and Other Supports at School:** Your school must provide you the same supports it offers other students, including a computer and internet access if you need them to continue learning while schools are closed. You can also receive free school meals wherever you go to school. Call your POC or school principal to ask for help getting what you need for school.
- 4. You Have Important Rights in Residential Placement:** You have the right to attend a public school if you are in a residential placement. You cannot be forced to attend an “on-grounds” school without a court order. If you attend an on-grounds school, that school must still provide “continuity of education” so you can continue learning while schools are closed. If you’re at risk of serious illness due to COVID-19 because of your health, talk to your child advocate.
- 5. You Can Get Help Graduating and Planning Your Future:** If you were on track to graduate, you should graduate on time. Child welfare agencies and school guidance counselors can help you apply for financial aid for college, including [tuition waivers](#) for youth who have been in foster care. You should not be punished because of the crisis.

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education.

ELC’s publications provide a general statement of the law. However, each situation is different, and state and federal guidance on these topics continues to change.

If you have questions or concerns, please call our Helpline at 215-238-6970 (Eastern and Central PA) or 412-258-2120 (Western PA).