

July 1, 2011

Dear Chief State School Officer:

On behalf of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education within the U.S. Department of Education and the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, I am pleased to invite you to attend a national meeting, *Child Welfare, Education and the Courts: A Collaboration to Strengthen Educational Successes of Children and Youth in Foster Care*. This meeting will occur on November 3rd and 4th at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.

The purpose of the meeting is to bring together State teams representing education and child welfare agencies, along with the judicial branch to discuss how best to promote educational stability and improve educational outcomes for children in foster care. This will assist in a more comprehensive and meaningful implementation of The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-351). The law requires that State child welfare agencies include actions in case plans that will increase educational stability for children in foster care. In particular, the law specifically requires that child welfare agencies coordinate efforts with education agencies to keep children enrolled in their current school while in foster care, thereby keeping them connected with family, teachers and friends while continuing their progression through school.

In order to implement the directives of the Act, our goal is to have three representatives from each State educational agency (SEA) attend the national meeting. Given the critical leadership role that you play in addressing the educational needs of children and youth in foster care, your attendance and support in this effort would be invaluable. Participating SEA staff will be joining representatives from the judicial branch and child welfare from each State to comprise a "State team" charged with creating a plan for cross-system collaboration to be implemented following the conference. The Children's Bureau will sponsor three SEA representatives. Sponsorship will include pre-paid airfare and lodging, as well as reimbursement for meals and ground transportation.

We encourage you to consider who at the SEA would be best-suited to attend and actively participate in this conference and plan development. Attendees might include, but are not limited to, State Directors of the Title I, Neglected and Delinquent or Special Education programs, or leadership from the Office of the Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth. To facilitate discussion between you and your staff, we have enclosed a brief that provides information concerning the purpose and goals of the meeting.

Once you have identified your representatives, please forward their names and contact information (including name, title, organization, telephone number and email address) to Laura Jiménez at laura.jimenez@ed.gov. Responses would be greatly appreciated by July 20, 2011. Please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Jiménez via email or by telephone at (202) 260-7052 should you have any questions or concerns. In addition, staff from the U.S. Department of Education will be following up shortly to provide additional details about this meeting.

I look forward to your team joining colleagues from across the nation, including leaders from child welfare and the judicial branch in supporting this effort to further improve the educational well-being of children and youth in foster care.

Sincerely,

/s/

Dr. Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana
Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

/s/

Dr. Carl Harris
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: State Title I Director