

# FOSTER CARE DATA EXCHANGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES: Georgia



Students in foster care<sup>1</sup>

**11,075**



Graduation rate<sup>2</sup>

**39%** students in foster care

**82%** all students



Academic achievement<sup>3</sup>

Meeting or exceeding academic standard

Students in

foster care

All students

**English/language arts**

**24%**

**45%**

**Mathematics**

**23%**

**44%**

## Data Exchange at a Glance

**Formal agreement<sup>4</sup> established between SEA and CWA:**

Yes, in 2018

**Frequency of data exchange:**

Annually

**Direction of exchange:<sup>5</sup>**

Bidirectional between SEA and CWA and from SEA to LEAs.



**Data categories shared:**

Demographic, education, and welfare service information.

## Data Exchange Process

Georgia has a data-sharing agreement between the Georgia Department of Education as the State educational agency (SEA) and the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services as the child welfare agency (CWA). The data-sharing agreement was created as an MOU in 2018 to inform education providers and enable them to better serve children in the foster care system.

**One data exchange process occurs once a year and includes the following steps:**



**The CWA prepares the data.** The CWA manages the Georgia SHINES database, a statewide information system for children in foster care that contains fields for name, Social Security number, gender, county, entry date, discharge date, and case file number. Though the CWA database is updated once a week, data is only shared with the SEA once a year. Notably, the database also contains the child’s Georgia Testing Identifier (GTID), which is used by the SEA. The GTID is entered and validated in the CWA database by the CWA Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation unit. The data are then shared with the SEA using a secure file transfer protocol.



**The SEA and CWA exchange data.** Pursuant to an MOU, the SEA adds information from the CWA dataset to its Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) using each child’s GTID. The SEA then shares data on academic outcomes (e.g., graduation) and demographics with the CWA. Annual foster care status for students from this dataset is also used by the SEA for analysis and reporting purposes.

**A separate, second process is in place for providing monthly updates of students entering or leaving foster care.**

This second process provides monthly status updates to school staff to share which of their students are in foster care at any given time. No information from this process is used in annual reporting or any other analysis.



**The CWA prepares the data.** The CWA generates a monthly list of children actively in foster care for the current month.



**The CWA provides the data to the SEA.** The current foster status of students is sent by the CWA to the SEA for dissemination to the local educational agencies (LEAs) via SLDS.



**The SEA shares data with LEAs.** The SEA uses SLDS to report current information about the status of students in foster care to LEA staff.

## Drivers of Success

Some key facilitators that support the implementation of Georgia's data-sharing agreement include:

1. The presence of the Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation unit in the CWA. Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation is a dedicated academic support program for children in the foster care program, and staff are responsible for obtaining the Georgia Testing Identifier used by the SEA for each child. The presence of the Georgia Testing Identifier in the CWA allows for direct merging of the CWA and SEA datasets.
2. The development of strong relationships between SEA and CWA staff, including high-level staff members. The Georgia SEA and CWA have planned conferences together to discuss issues related to children in foster care.
3. State law, Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-2-152.2, requiring LEAs to know which students are in foster care.<sup>6</sup>

## Future Opportunities

One main opportunity for the implementation of the data-sharing agreement is to improve staff retention. When staff leave or retire, information about the data-sharing process is not retained. New staff require training in various stages of the process, such as data entry and data matching. The SEA views staff retention and training as a future phase of the implementation of its data-sharing agreement.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The sum of district totals for 2019-2020 school year, which is not the overall State total due to student mobility, available at <https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Documents/Foster%20Care/FY20%20Foster%20Care%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage of students who graduated in 2019 (the most recent year reported for students in foster care), available at <https://gaawards.gosa.ga.gov/analytics/K12ReportCard>.

<sup>3</sup> 2018-19 school year data, available at <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/>.

<sup>4</sup> An MOU or other formal agreement.

<sup>5</sup> Data in the exchange can flow from one agency to another or be bidirectional.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, please see [GaDOE Guidance - Educational Performance Impact of Trauma on Foster Care Students \(HB 855\) 21-22.pdf](#).

## Additional Information

### Data provided by the CWA to the SEA:

- student name
- Social Security number
- student gender
- county
- entry date
- discharge date
- case file number
- GTID

### Data provided by the SEA to the CWA:

- graduation status
- academic outcomes
- demographics

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about students in foster care, please visit:

**U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education:**

<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/students-foster-care/>

**Georgia Department of Education:**

<https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Foster-Care-Program.aspx>

**Governor's Office of Student Achievement Dashboard:**

<https://gosa.georgia.gov/dashboards-data-report-card>

The State snapshot is developed based on publicly available information and information provided by the State.

