

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**Office of Elementary and Secondary Education****Records Transfer for Mobile Students****AGENCY:** Department of Education.**ACTION:** Request for comments on records transfer for mobile students.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education requests comments on (1) current methods for transferring educational and health records and enrolling highly mobile students, especially migrant students, at the appropriate grade level and documenting their course completion; and (2) how the Federal Government can best work with State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) to improve existing systems and technologies for transferring records between school districts. The Department will review and analyze information obtained through this notice and will use it to consider what, if any, Federal actions might be useful to those who provide direct services to children.

DATES: Comments are requested by February 27, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Lori_Ahmady, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Ave., SW, Room 4100 Portals, Washington, DC 20202-6135. Comments sent by courier should be addressed to Lori Ahmady, 1250 Maryland Ave., SW, Suite 4100, Washington, DC 20024. Comments may also be sent via the Internet to Lori_Ahmady@ed.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lori Ahmady, at the above addresses or by telephone at 202-260-1391. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: For purposes of this discussion, "highly mobile students" includes specific groups targeted by programs the Department administers, i.e., children of migrant agricultural or fishing workers, homeless children, and military dependents, as well as other children whose education is adversely affected by frequent moves (children from poor urban families and children of other itinerant workers). Also, for purposes of this discussion, a "student record" consists of a body of information transferred from one school to another, electronically, by telephone, or in hard

copy, to assist in the enrollment and appropriate placement of the student in the new school. These records may include official transcripts, report cards, cumulative files, health records, and other related information. The content of a student record may differ substantially between elementary and secondary schools, between public and private schools, and among States and localities.

The Department's current interest in records transfer is prompted by a number of factors, including the high rate of mobility within our society as a whole, and the effects of that mobility on educating school-age children. A recent report by the General Accounting Office (GAO), stated that "The United States has one of the highest mobility rates of all developed countries. * * * One in six of the Nation's children who are third-graders—over a half million—have changed school frequently, attending at least three different schools since the beginning of first grade. Unless policymakers focus greater attention on the needs of children who have changed schools frequently—often low-income, inner city, migrant, and limited English proficient (LEP)—these children may continue to be low achieving. * * * Studies such as this one have focused public attention on the need to provide timely and comparable records to help mobile children, who are less likely to receive federally funded services than their more stable peers, get the help they need. This study also questioned the utility and adequacy of current records transfer efforts on behalf of children who move frequently from one district (or even one school) to another. The GAO study reports that "* * * the most commonly used mode of transferring student records—by mail—can be cumbersome and time-consuming. In one State, local officials reported it often takes 2 to 6 weeks before a new child's records arrive. In a school with a high mobility rate, teachers rarely used records to place children * * * because these records usually arrived days or weeks after the children transferred or not at all. * * *" These delays may prove particularly limiting for those subpopulations of students who are highly mobile, such as the children of migrant agricultural workers, children of other itinerant workers, homeless children, children from poor urban families, and military dependents.

In response to recommendations from several groups that the Department explore the potential of new technologies (e.g., FAX technology and electronic data interchange (EDI)) to improve records transfer for all children and particularly for highly mobile

student subpopulations, Department staff have, over the past year, initiated conversations with the Council of Chief State School Officers about its SPEEDE/ExPRESS data transfer protocols, commissioned a report of available data on alternatives to the current Migrant Student Record Transfer System and convened a Departmental workgroup to study records transfer issues. The Department has also discussed issues related to records transfer for mobile students with some SEA and LEA representatives. These initial efforts have indicated, in part, that even with new technologies for linking all State educational records systems and new momentum to expand the automation of SEA and LEA student data systems, the costs of applying technology to records transfer, while unknown, are likely to be considerable.

Request for Comments

The Assistant Secretary, in particular, requests comments from knowledgeable education personnel in LEAs and SEAs, especially from those teachers, counselors, school administrators, and other school personnel who are responsible for placement and credit acceptance decisions in schools and LEAs that have a high mobility rate among students. Parents of mobile children are also requested to comment.

In order to determine whether and how the Federal Government might assist States and localities in developing strategies for transferring records for highly mobile students, the Department is seeking public comment about current practices and barriers to the transfer of student records. In addition, information obtained through this notice will contribute to the preparation of a report of findings and recommendations on records transfer to be submitted to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives as required in section 1308(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by Pub. L. 103-382. The Department will consider all timely comments received and does not require commenters to identify themselves. The information requested in this notice regarding characteristics of the commenter is needed for analysis only.

Commenter Characteristics

1. Indicate either the type of organization you represent or your occupation, e.g., parent, teacher, counselor, local program or school administrator, State educational agency management information systems specialist, advocacy organization, State

or local educational agency staff, or other.

2. Indicate the nature of the mobility you deal with most frequently, (e.g., within district, across districts within your State, or across States), the kind of mobile students you or your organization deals with the most (e.g., migrant children, homeless children, military dependents), and the amount of mobility you deal with (e.g., the approximate percentage of students in your school, district or State who move each year).

Questions for Commenters

1. How, in your experience, are students' educational and health records currently transferred across schools, districts and States (e.g., by mail, FAX, telephone, electronic transfer)?

2. For newly arriving students, what information do school personnel and classroom teachers use to enroll students, assign them to a grade level or class, and grant credit for coursework completed at previous schools? Where does this information come from (e.g., teacher observations, the student's

cumulative files, migrant student records, formal or informal needs assessments, or other information obtained from the student, the student's family, or the students' previous schools)?

3. To what extent do schools and teachers rely upon records transferred from other schools to make or confirm enrollment, placement, programming and other educational or support service decisions including the transfer of credits for high school graduation? (Commenters are asked to characterize how much they rely on student records in making or confirming these decisions, and how comfortable they are in doing so, as compared to other information sources like those listed in Question #2.)

4. Are existing methods of transferring student records from school to school adequate? If not, what problems or barriers exist and what are their ensuing consequences for highly mobile students, including migrant students? How prevalent are these problems and their subsequent effects on mobile students? Are there particular situations

in which problems occur most frequently?

5. What can States, school districts, and individual schools do to improve the transfer of student records? What can parents do to ensure that their children's records move from school to school?

6. Should the Federal Government work to advance the development of more effective State and local methods of transferring student records? How?

Invitation to Comment

All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available during and after the comment period in room 4100, Portals Building, 1250 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday, through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Dated: January 6, 1995.

Thomas W. Payzant,

Assistant Secretary, Elementary and Secondary Education.

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