

Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate education (including public preschool education) provided to other students. Special attention will be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, the district will take reasonable steps to ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school on the basis of their homeless status.

Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including available pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, highly capable programs and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including those students who are:

- A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- B. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- C. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. Are abandoned in hospitals;
- E. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- F. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
- G. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The Superintendent shall designate a district-level liaison for homeless students and their families. If the district has identified more than ten unaccompanied youth, meaning youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and including youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, an administrator of the school building will establish a point of contact for such youth. The point of contact is responsible for identifying homeless and unaccompanied youth and connecting them with the district's homeless student liaison. The district's homeless liaison is responsible for training the building points of contact.

Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families' resident in the district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing and in a language they understand. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including academic records, medical records, proof of residency, mailing address or other documentation or denied or delayed due to missed application deadlines or fees.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district and building liaisons are directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies.

Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. However, emergency contact information cannot be demanded in a form or manner that constructs a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

The district maintains and makes available in a timely fashion, any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding each homeless child or youth.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

The district's liaison for homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

The superintendent will:

- Strongly encourage training of district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers, in McKinney-Vento laws and protocols.
- Strongly encourage the district-level liaison and building-level liaisons to attend trainings provided by the state on identification and serving homeless children and youth.
- Ensure that the district includes in materials provided to all students at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment, information about services and support for homeless students.
- Use a variety of communications each year to notify students and families about services and support available to them if they experience homelessness.

