

## HOMELESS STUDENTS

### DEFINITIONS:

1. “Enrollment” means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
2. “School of origin” means the school that a student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a preschool. (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(3)(I)(i)).

When the student has completed the final grade served by the school of origin, the term “school of origin” shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

3. “Homeless student” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes:
  - a. Students who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
  - b. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
  - c. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and
  - d. Migratory students who qualify as homeless because the students are living in circumstances described in a – c above.
4. “Unaccompanied student” includes a student not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
5. “Parent” means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.
6. “District liaison is the staff person designated as the local homeless education liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
7. “School liaison” is the staff person designated by the school district as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the District liaison.

### IDENTIFICATION:

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the school/District liaisons will affirmatively seek out and identify children and youth experiencing homelessness. The District liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth experiencing homelessness and procedures for forwarding information, including homelessness to the school liaison.

#### **SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT TO SCHOOL:**

The District shall, according to the student's best interests, continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and for the remainder of an academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed, (42 U.S.C 11432(g)(3)(A)(i)(II)) or enroll the student in a District school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

In determining the best interest of the student, the District shall:

1. Presume that keeping the student in his/her school of origin is in the best interest, unless doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian;
2. Provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, if the District sends a homeless student to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian;
3. Ensure that the District's liaison helps with placement or enrollment decisions for an unaccompanied student and gives priority to the views of the student (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(3)(B)(iv)), and provides a notice of the right to appeal, on placement and enrollment decisions.

The District shall not segregate homeless students from non-homeless students.

Best interest will be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth's wishes. Potential best interest considerations include:

- The impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(3)(B)(ii));
- The age of the child or youth;
- The distance of a commute and the impact it may have on the student's education;
- Personal safety issues;
- A student's need for special instruction;
- The length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or temporary location;
- The time remaining in the school year.

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin and services under federal and other programs, will not be considered in determining best interest.

The student may continue attending the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness and/or until the end of the academic year in which the student moves into permanent housing.

**ENROLLMENT:**

The District shall immediately enroll the student in the school selected even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. The District shall immediately contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other student records. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency;
- Transcripts/school records. If the school cannot promptly gain access to the student's former school records, initial placement of students may be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent and previous school or teachers;
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records. If necessary, the school shall refer students to the school liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records;
- Proof of guardianship;
- Birth certificate;
- Any other documents required;
- Unpaid school fees;
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes;
- Any factor related to the student's living situation.

Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or school liaison.

A student shall be granted enrollment even if he/she has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

**ENROLLMENT DISPUTES:**

If a dispute arises over school selection, enrollment or eligibility, the student shall be immediately admitted to the school requested, pending resolution of the dispute.

The parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision regarding school selection, including the rights of the parent, guardian or student to appeal the decision through the State's Dispute Resolution Process, a copy of which is attached hereto as an exhibit.

The student, parent or guardian shall be referred to the District's liaison who shall ensure the resolution process is carried out as expeditiously as possible. In the case of an unaccompanied student, the District's liaison shall ensure the student is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute.

During any enrollment dispute, the student will have the right to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals and Title I, Part A services while the dispute is pending.

**FREE MEALS:**

Hunger and poor nutrition are obvious barriers to learning. To help ensure that homeless children are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all homeless children are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day the homeless child enrolls in school, the enrolling school should submit the student's name using the Homeless Student Referral form to the District nutritious office for immediate processing.

**TITLE I, PART A:**

Homeless children are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless of what school they attend. The District will reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to homeless children attending non-participating schools. The District's Title I plan will be coordinated through collaboration between the Title I Director and the school liaison.

**SERVICES:**

Each homeless student shall be provided with services comparable to services offered to other students, including the following:

1. Homeless children shall have access to public pre-school programs, administered by the state or school district as provided to other children in the District.
2. Homeless youth and youth separated from public schools must be identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services, including identifying and removing barriers that prevent youth described in this clause from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial course work satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with state, local and school policies.
3. Homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria shall not face barriers to access academic and extra-curricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advance placement, online learning, and charter school programs if such programs are available through the school district.
4. Homeless students must be given all educational services for which they are eligible including, but not limited to, Title I; special education; programs for English learners; career and technical education; talented and gifted programs; and school nutrition programs.
5. To ensure continued enrollment in school and access to services, homeless students enrolled in the District shall have access to adequate and appropriate school supplies and waiver of school fees

consistent with the District's fee waiver procedures as well as tutoring services deemed necessary and consistent with school policy.

6. The District shall ensure that homeless students receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths and prepare and prove the readiness of such youths for college, including instruction concerning the State's Hathaway scholarship program and post-secondary preparation.

#### **TRANSPORTATION:**

The District shall provide or arrange transportation for a homeless student to and from the school of origin when the student is residing within the District and the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student requests that such transportation be provided. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, including during pending disputes. The District liaison will request transportation to and from the school of origin for the unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered only in determining whether the placement in the school of origin is in the student's best interest. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of their right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

If the homeless student moves to an area served by another school district, though continuing his/her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the district in which the student is living must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to and from the school of origin. If the school districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility must be shared equally.

#### **COORDINATION:**

The District shall coordinate the provision of services to homeless students with local service agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless students and their families. Services will also be provided in cooperation with other districts on inter-district issues such as transportation, transfer of school records, and issues concerning appropriate credit for full or partial course work completed at a prior school to ensure that homeless students have access to available educational and related services.

#### **DISTRICT/SCHOOL LIAISONS:**

The District/school liaison(s) shall ensure that:

- Homeless students are identified;
- Homeless students enroll and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in District schools;
- Homeless families and students have access to and receive educational services through Head Start, Early Intervention, and preschool services;
- Homeless families and students receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to health care services and other appropriate services;
- Parents of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to students and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their students;

- Public notice of educational rights of homeless students is distributed in location frequented by homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth and where such students receive services (e.g., schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens);
- Enrollment disputes are mediated through the McKinney-Vento Act dispute resolution procedures;
- Parents of homeless students or any unaccompanied student are fully informed of all transportation services;
- School personnel providing services to homeless students receive professional development and other support; (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(6)(A)(ix));
- Unaccompanied youth may obtain assistance to receive verification of their independent status on the FAFSA; (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(6)(A)(x)(III));
- School personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless students and their families are informed of the liaison's duties.

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