

Homeless Students

Definitions

1. “Enrollment” means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
2. “School of origin” means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school where last enrolled.
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; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster placement;
 - 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.
4. “Unaccompanied student” includes a student not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Assignment to School

The district shall, according to the student’s best interest, continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, or enroll the student in a district school in the attendance area in which the homeless student is actually living on the same basis as other district students.

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

1. To the extent feasible, keep a homeless student in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes 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. In the case of an unaccompanied student, ensure that the district's liaison helps in placement or enrollment decisions, considers the views of the student and provides notice of the right to appeal placement and enrollment decisions.

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, such as academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation.

The district shall immediately contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the district shall immediately refer the parent or guardian to the district's liaison, who will help in obtaining necessary immunizations or records.

Records

Any records ordinarily maintained by the district, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs, shall be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a homeless student enters a new school or school district, consistent with state and federal law.

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, 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 district's discrimination complaint procedure.

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.

Services

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

1. Transportation services;
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2. Education services for which the student is eligible, such as:
 - a. Title I¹;
 - b. Special education;
 - c. Programs for students with limited English proficiency;
 - d. Professional technical programs;
 - e. Talented and gifted programs.
3. School nutrition programs.

Coordination

The district shall coordinate the provision of services to homeless students with local social 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 interdistrict issues, such as transportation or transfer of school records, to ensure that homeless students have access to available education and related services.

District Liaison

The district's liaison shall ensure that:

1. Homeless students are identified;
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in district schools;
3. Homeless families and students receive educational services for which they are eligible, and referrals to health-care services, dental services, mental health service and other appropriate services;
4. Parents of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to the students and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their students;
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is distributed where such students receive services (e.g., schools, family shelters and soup kitchens);
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated;
7. The parent of a homeless student, or any unaccompanied student, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected;
8. School personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless students and their families are informed of the liaison's duties.

¹ All homeless students are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of their current academic performance.

The district's liaison shall coordinate and collaborate with the state coordinator, community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless students.

DATED: 2/11/05
REVIEW DATES: 2/21/05
REVIEWED BY: LEADERSHIP COUNCIL