

SUPPORT GUIDELINES FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN OR YOUTH

POLICY:

The McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act, part of No Child Left Behind, mandates that all local educational agencies, such as school districts, independent charter schools, private schools and county offices of education, designate an appropriate staff person as the liaison for homeless children/youth. This policy addresses the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness to a free and appropriate public education. N.E.W. Academy Schools are responsible for ensuring the identification, enrollment, attendance, and academic success of students who are homeless.

GUIDELINES:

I. DEFINITION OF A “HOMELESS STUDENT”

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines “homeless” as follows: the term homeless children and youth means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including but not limited to:

- A. A primary nighttime residence that is a shelter designated to provide temporary living accommodations including, but not limited to, motels/hotels, family shelters, domestic violence shelters, congregate shelters, and transitional housing.
- B. Living in a car, park, abandoned building, garage, substandard housing, or other public or private places not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, for human beings.
- C. Temporarily living in a trailer park or camping area with his/her family, because of a lack of adequate living accommodations.
- D. Living “doubled –up”. These are children and youth who are temporarily sharing the housing of other families due to loss of housing, stemming from financial problems (e.g., loss of job, eviction, or natural disaster). *Families who share housing due to cultural preferences or convenience would not be considered homeless.*
- E. Youth abandoned at a hospital.
- F. Residing in a home for unwed mothers as a school-aged, unwed mother, or mother-to-be, if there are no other available living accommodations.
- G. Awaiting foster care in limited circumstances (e.g., does not include placement in kinship care, foster family, foster family agency, or group home).
- H. Placed by the state in an emergency shelter because there was no other place.
- I. Abandoned, runaway, or pushed out youth or a migratory child living in circumstances as described above. Unaccompanied youth are defined as youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent, guardian or caregiver and includes youth who have run away from home, have been told to leave, or pregnant or parenting teens not living with their parent or guardian.

II. ENROLLMENT RIGHTS UNDER MCKINNEY-VENTO:

Homeless students have the right to:

- A. Enroll immediately.
- B. Confidentiality: A student's residency status, like all school records, shall be kept confidential.
- C. Homeless students should not be stigmatized or segregated from their peers.

III. ENROLLMENT PROTOCOLS FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

All applicants qualify for open enrollment.

- A. After identification as homeless, the school shall immediately enroll the student in school, even if records normally required for enrollment are lacking (e.g., academic records, special education records, proof of residency, medical records and/or immunizations). "Enroll and Enrollment" are defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
- B. The enrolling school shall immediately contact the last school of attendance to obtain academic, health and other relevant records that are lacking at the time of enrollment.
- C. As required for all students, an emergency contact form must be completed.
- D. A thirty (30) day conditional enrollment is to be granted if immunization records are not available at the time of enrollment; including the Tdap requirement. The school nurse will follow up every thirty (30) days until the immunization record is completed and the student continues to attend school. Enrollment MUST NOT be delayed, even if documents normally required for enrollment are lacking.
- E. If the school is at capacity, refer to the annual enrollment memorandum.

IV. . RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Homeless Education Program Coordinator Responsibilities
The Homeless Education Program Pupil Services and Attendance Coordinator serves as the identified Homeless Education Program Liaison for the School. The Coordinator is responsible for working with parents to:
 - 1. Ensure homeless children and youth are properly identified and promptly enrolled by school personnel.
 - 2. Inform parent/guardian/unaccompanied homeless youth of educational and related opportunities available and encourage parents to actively participate in their child's education.
 - 3. Ensure children, youth, and their families have equal access to all educational services for which they are eligible.
 - 4. Inform parent/guardian/unaccompanied homeless youth of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and the criteria for transportation assistance.

5. Assist unaccompanied homeless youth with enrollment, school placement, and obtaining immunization records.
6. Provide students and their families with referrals to community services, such as healthcare, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services as needed.
7. Participate in the mediation of school enrollment disputes.
8. Collaborate with county and state homeless liaisons.

B. Homeless Education Counselor/Advocate Responsibilities

The Homeless Education Counselor/Advocates are responsible for ensuring that legal mandates are implemented at the school site level.

The Homeless Education Counselor/Advocates responsibilities include:

1. Ensure homeless children and youth are properly identified and promptly enrolled by school personnel.
2. Facilitate the school enrollment process to ensure equal access to educational and meal programs, as well as tutoring and other services available at the school site.
3. Assist unaccompanied homeless youth with enrollment procedures, school placement options, and retrieval of immunization records.
4. Provide technical assistance regarding the proper identification, enrollment, and service needs of homeless students and their families.
5. Ensure that homeless students are identified at the school sites.
6. Provide assistance with transportation, backpacks, school supplies, and clothing.
7. Provide referrals to medical, dental, and mental health services, in addition to other school/community services as needed.
8. Educate students and parents regarding their educational rights, and promote parent participation in school related activities.
9. Collaborate with various School personnel to address barriers that may prevent a student from accessing education.
10. Conduct professional development trainings for school personnel and community agencies regarding the rights and responsibilities of the homeless population.

C. School Site Responsibilities

1. Every school principal shall designate a School Site Homeless Liaison to ensure the implementation of policy.
2. Ensure that students, who become homeless at any time during the school year, are identified at the school sites.
3. Ensure that homeless student information is updated throughout the year. Students who have become permanently housed during the academic year should have the homeless indicator removed at the beginning of the following school year.

D. School Site Homeless Liaison Responsibilities

The School Site Homeless Liaison is responsible for implementing the mandates of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

1. Ensure proper identification and enrollment procedures for homeless students are implemented.
2. Provide advocacy and support as needed to ensure that homeless students are placed in the appropriate classrooms to facilitate academic growth and success.

3. Train school staff on proper guidelines and procedures in regard to homeless youth and children.
4. Assist families with referrals to school based educational programs and/or support services as well as community resources.

V. ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH PROGRAM

All students who meet the federal definition of homelessness are automatically eligible for the USDA free nutrition program. This eligibility must be reviewed annually.

ASSISTANCE: For assistance or further information, please contact the Homeless Liaison

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