



Harriet Tubman School of Science and Technology

Homelessness Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify statutory rights of children and youths experiencing homelessness as provided by federal and state law. This policy shall be interpreted and implemented in conformance with federal and state law and shall supersede any other School policy provisions relating to children and youths experiencing homelessness.

It is the intent of this policy to ensure that homeless children and youths are provided with equal access to the same free, appropriate education as other students, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging academic standards to which all students are held, and are not segregated, separated or isolated on the basis of their status as homeless and shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from being stigmatized or discriminated against on the basis of their homelessness.

Duration

This policy is permanent.

Policy

SECTION 1. Definitions

- a. **“homeless children and youths”** means, according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 *et seq.* (the “**Act**”), children and youths who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence within the meaning of 42 U.S.C. § 11302(a)(1); and includes children and youths who:
 - i. are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;

- ii. are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - iii. are living in emergency or transitional shelters;
 - iv. are abandoned in hospitals;
 - v. are awaiting foster care placement;
 - vi. 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;
 - vii. are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - viii. are migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in (i) through (vii) above.
- b. **“unaccompanied youth”** means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
 - c. **“school of origin”** means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
 - d. **“enroll”** and **“enrollment”** means attending school and participating fully in school activities.
 - e. **“immediate”** means without delay.
 - f. **“parent”** means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.
 - g. **“Liaison”** means the staff person designated by the School and each local education agency (LEA) in the state as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the Act under 42 U.S.C. § 11432.

SECTION 2. Liaison (Assistant Executive Director)

The Liaison shall coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth as well as public and private service providers in the community. Coordination will include attending outreach training and participating in the local continuum of care (i.e., homeless coalition, homeless steering committee, and other relevant groups).

SECTION 3. Identification

The School shall use the following methods to identify homeless children:

- a. Training school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness; sensitivity in identifying homeless children; techniques for collecting needed information; and School policy and procedures.
- b. Collaborating with community agencies to find and refer homeless children; and
- c. Collecting and maintaining data on the number of homeless children in the School's attendance zone and in the neighborhoods in close proximity to the School.

SECTION 4. School Selection

- a. Maintaining a stable school environment is crucial to a homeless student's success in school. To ensure stability, the School must consider the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth based on student-centered factors. The School must:
 - i. Continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year even if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
 - ii. Assist a public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth, or the family of the child or youth, is actually living are eligible to attend enroll the student.
- b. When determining the child or youth's best interest, the School must assume that keeping the homeless student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or the student if he or she is an unaccompanied youth.
- c. When determining the student's best interest, the School must also consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless students and give priority to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or youth (if an unaccompanied youth). The School also considers the school placement of siblings when making this determination.
- d. If the School finds that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or accompanied youth, the School must provide the individual with a written explanation and reason for the determination in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. This written explanation will include appeal rights and be provided in a timely manner.

SECTION 5. Enrollment

- a. The Executive Director shall notify the Liaison (Assistant Executive Director) when a homeless student is identified.
- b. If a homeless student arrives at school without a parent or guardian, the student is enrolled immediately, and the Executive Director is notified. The Executive Director shall contact the parent or guardian, if any, and will help facilitate completion of the enrollment process. The students must meet the School's age eligibility criteria for enrollment.
- c. A homeless student is enrolled immediately even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment. When a student enrolls without education records (i.e., transcripts/grade reports, birth certificate, immunizations/health records), the Executive Director should:
 - i. Contact the former school to request the student's records and discuss immunization information and tentative placement;
 - ii. Create a cumulative record if it is determined that the records are not available; and
 - iii. Contact the Liaison (Assistant Director) for assistance in the referral of the student to Fulton County Board of Health for follow-up in acquiring required immunizations.
- d. Affidavit requirements for a homeless student are satisfied by completing the Student Enrollment form.
- e. The School shall provide the parent/guardian, if any, with a copy of the homeless student's enrollment documentation.
- f. Parents/guardians, if any, will provide the School with contact information.
- g. If the School is contacted by another school or school district for a homeless student's records, requested information is provided in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and school records are sent immediately, when possible, or no later than 15 days to the receiving school or school district.

SECTION 6. Transportation

Transportation is provided to and from the school of origin if requested by the

parent/guardian and where required by federal law, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1432(g)(1)(J)(iii).

- a. The School shall promptly provide homeless students with transportation services that are comparable to those available to non-homeless students. At the request of the parent or guardian, or the Liaison (Assistant Director) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the School shall provide or arrange for, transportation to and from the school of origin.
 - i. If the homeless student continues to live in the School's attendance zone, transportation shall be provided, or the School shall arrange for the student's transportation, to/from his/her school of origin.
 - ii. If the best interest determination is that the student should continue his/her education at the school of origin which is the School, the School and the school district in which the student resides shall agree upon a method to equitably apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If there is no agreement, the School shall assume responsibility to transport the student to the School.
 - iii. If the homeless student resides in the School's attendance zone, but the best interest determination is that the student should continue his/her education at the school of origin in another district, the School and the school district which is the school of origin is located shall agree upon a method to equitably apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If there is no agreement, the School shall assume responsibility to transport the student to the school of origin in the other district. Since Federal law requires the responsibility and costs of transportation services to be shared equally, the district in which the school of origin is located shall be invoiced for its share of the cost for transportation.
 - iv. When the student obtains permanent housing, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- b. The mode of transportation shall be determined in consultation with the parent or guardian, if any, and shall be based on the best interest of the student.
- c. In accordance with Federal law, the above transportation requirements still apply during the resolution of any dispute. The School will work with the State to resolve transportation disputes with other school districts. Until the districts reach an agreement, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.
- d. If the disputing district is in another State, the School will turn to the State for assistance, as Federal guidance dictates that both states should try to arrange an

agreement for the LEAs.

SECTION 7. Services

- a. A homeless student is provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including
 - i. Transportation services;
 - ii. Educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English learners);
 - iii. Vocational and technical education programs;
 - iv. Gifted programs;
 - v. School nutrition programs (all identified homeless students are entitled to free meals pursuant to the Act)
 - vi. Before- and After-School programs, if eligible under the Act; and
 - vii. Preschool programs, if eligible under the Act.

- b. Homeless students are automatically eligible for services funded by Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), whether or not they attend a Title I school or meet the academic standards required for other eligible students. The School shall reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to homeless students attending non-participating schools. Reserved funds are used to provide educationally-related support services to homeless students, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers that prevent regular attendance.

SECTION 8. Disputes

- a. If the School denies the enrollment, school of origin or transportation request, the parent/guardian shall receive a written explanation of the School's decision, including the right to appeal, and a copy of the dispute procedure. The School will adhere strictly to the School's dispute resolution procedure.

- b. If a parent/guardian disputes the School's decision:
 - i. The student is immediately admitted to the School, pending resolution of the dispute;
 - ii. The dispute is referred to the Liaison (Assistant Director) who will resolve and/or consult with the Executive Director for resolution;
 - iii. If the matter is not resolved at that level, the Governing Board

- shall issue the School's decision.
- iv. If the matter is not resolved at the School level, the parent/guardian may contact the Georgia Department of Education.

SECTION 9. Credits for Full or Partial Coursework

The School has an obligation to remove barriers to the academic success of homeless students. The School must contact the school last attended by the homeless student to obtain relevant academic or other records and provide credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at the previous school of enrollment.

Approval

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