



WESTPORT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Enrolling in Westport Community Schools Residency Policy

What is the Westport Community Schools residency policy?

The residency policy helps ensure that only families who live in the Town of Westport have full access to educational opportunities offered by the Westport Community Schools. The policy outlines a specific definition of “residency,” acceptable proof of residency and actions that the school district takes when the policy is violated.

How is Westport “residency” defined?

To attend Westport Community Schools, a student must actually reside permanently in the Town of Westport. Temporary residence in the Town of Westport, solely for the purpose of attending a Westport public school, shall not be considered residency. The residence of a minor child is presumed to be the legal residence of the parent or guardian who has physical custody of the child. Any student 18 years or older may establish a residence apart from his or her parent or guardian for school attendance purposes.

How does Westport Community Schools verify Westport residency?

Families enrolling in Westport Community Schools must demonstrate Westport residency by submitting one document from each of three categories listed on the form: ***Acceptable Proof of Residency***. A copy of this form is available from any Westport school and on the school district website (www.westportschools.org) for a complete list of acceptable proofs of residency. In order to verify residency, Westport Community Schools reserves the right to request additional documents and/or to conduct an investigation. Because residency can change for students and their families during the school year, Westport Community Schools may verify residency at any time.

What if I don’t have the required proofs of residency with me when I register?

Families must submit the required three proofs. Families who do not have documents with them will be asked to return to the school with the appropriate materials in order to enroll. ***School staff cannot accept*** any substitutions for items on the list of acceptable proofs, and ***students will not be enrolled*** until acceptable proofs of residency have been submitted. Families who cannot provide the required proofs of residency may appeal to the Superintendent to discuss their unique circumstances. This residency policy does not apply to homeless students and their families.

What if I don’t have a lease?

If you are a tenant at will (“month-to-month”) and do not have a written lease, ask your landlord to complete and sign the ***Landlord/Tenant Affidavit***. A copy of this form is available from any Westport school and on the school district website (www.westportschools.org). This will fulfill the proof of residency requirement for Column C. Your landlord does not have to be present when you register, but the affidavit does have to be notarized.

What can I use for proof of recent rent or mortgage payment?

You may present a copy of a money order, cancelled check or rent receipt. You also may present a copy of a bank statement that shows an automatic deduction for rent or mortgage payment.

What if I own my home but do not have a copy of the property deed?

If you no longer pay a mortgage on your home, you must submit a copy of the property deed, along with a copy of the discharge of mortgage. Contact the financial institution that handles your mortgage or the Bristol County Registry of Deeds (contact information is listed below).

What if I do not pay for utilities or if none of the utility bills are in my name?

If you live in a household where all utilities are in someone else’s name – or if your lease specifies that all utilities are included and you do not have a “land-line” telephone or cable service – then you may submit one of the other documents listed in Column B, such as first-class mail or a government agency letter or document.

Is a cell phone bill an acceptable document to satisfy Column B? No. Only a home telephone (“land-line”) bill satisfies this requirement.

What if I have recently moved and have not yet received any utility bills?

To fulfill the requirements of Column B, you also may submit a work order from any utility company stating that your service has been ordered or installed.

What if I cannot produce all three required proofs?

If your personal circumstances make it impossible for you to provide proof of residency, you may appeal to the Superintendent to discuss your family's unique circumstances. The Superintendent may ask you to bring copies of any proofs of residency you have and describe the circumstances that prevent you from having the required proofs. The proof of residency policy does not apply to homeless students and families.

What if I live with a friend or relative?

If you share housing with a friend or relative, you may use the *Landlord/Tenant Affidavit* to fulfill the proof of residency requirement in Column C. A copy of this form is available from any Westport school and on the school district website (www.westportschools.org). If you are living with a friend or relative due to economic hardship, loss of housing, or a similar reason, you may qualify as homeless under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Homeless families are not required to produce the same proofs of residency. Please contact the Westport Community Schools Superintendent at (508) 636-1140.

What if my family is homeless?

The proof of residency policy does not apply to homeless students and families. Please contact the Westport Community Schools Superintendent at (508) 636-1140. If you are staying in a shelter, please bring a letter from the shelter staff stating that you are living there.

What if I am an undocumented immigrant?

Any child whose family lives in the Town of Westport is guaranteed access to a free public education in the Westport Community Schools. No family will be denied access to school because of their immigration status. Undocumented immigrant families living with friends or relatives may be considered "homeless" (see above).

Will documents that I submit to prove residency remain confidential?

All documents submitted to prove residency will be photocopied and placed in the student's permanent file, which is confidential. Westport Community Schools meets or exceeds the standards of confidentiality set forth in state and federal laws in maintenance of student records.

How can I report a suspected violation of the residency policy?

Anyone may report possible residency violations by calling any of the contacts listed below. You do not have to identify yourself. Your call may be anonymous. If you do identify yourself, your identity will remain confidential.

What are the consequences of residency fraud?

Any student who is discovered not to reside in the Town of Westport will be asked to withdraw from the Westport Community Schools. The student's family may appeal this determination to the Superintendent, whose decision shall be final. Appeals will be heard in a timely manner. A student may remain in school until all administrative appeals are exhausted. Additional penalties – including fines and legal action – may be imposed on families found to be in violation of the residency policy.

Important Contacts

Register your change of address with the **Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles**

www.mass.gov/rmv

Request a copy of your property deed **Bristol County Registry of Deeds – Southern District**

www.newbedforddeeds.com

Contact the Superintendent **Dr. Gary Reese, Superintendent**

Telephone (508) 636-1140 Extension 4002

Contact the Homeless Liaison **Ms. Elaine Santos, Homeless Liaison**

Telephone (508) 636-1140 Extension 4011