

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Title</i> HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES	<i>Code</i> JFABD
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HOLLISTON

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the educational stability of homeless students and their equal access to the same free and appropriate education as other students through receipt of a high school diploma, certificate of attainment or certificate of completion. As required by law, the Holliston Public Schools (HPS) will work with homeless children and youth and unaccompanied youth (collectively, “homeless students”) and their parents or legal guardians to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided available district services for which they are eligible, including pres-school programs, Title I, special education, English Language Learner/English as a second language program, vocational and technical education programs, school nutrition programs, summer programming and extracurricular activities and transportation.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Being abandoned in hospitals;
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; and
7. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

Students Remaining in Schools of Origin

It is presumed to be in the best interest of homeless students to remain in their schools of origin, i.e. the school that the student was attending at the time he or she became homeless, or the last school the student attended prior to becoming homeless. Homeless students may continue to be enrolled in their school of origin for as long as they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. For homeless students who complete the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term “school of origin” shall also include the receiving school in the same school district educating students at the next grade level.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation comparable to that provided for all other students attending school in the district. The district will transport students who are sheltered or temporarily residing within the district to the student’s school of origin. For homeless students attending a school of origin located outside the district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing, the district in which the school or origin is located will coordinate with the district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing to provide the transportation services necessary for the student, and these districts will divide the cost equally. Formerly homeless students who find permanent housing mid-year will continue to receive transportation services until the end of the school year.

Students Enrolling in District Where Sheltered or Temporarily Residing

Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians may elect to enroll homeless students in the school district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing. Enrollment changes for

homeless students should take place immediately. Accordingly, the district will provide transportation services to school in a manner comparable to the transportation provided for all other students in the district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and parents/guardians should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary.

If homeless students are unable to provide written proof of their shelter or temporary residence in the district, the homeless liaison will work with the parent/guardian seeking enrollment to determine homelessness. Information regarding a homeless student's living arrangement shall be considered a student education record, and not directory information. Records containing information about the homeless student's living arrangements may not be disclosed without the consent of the parent/guardian or satisfaction of another student-privacy related exemption.

Dispute Resolution

If the district disagrees with a parent or guardian's decision to keep a student enrolled in the school of origin and considers enrollment in the district where the student is sheltered or temporarily residing to be in the student's best interest, the district will explain to the parent, in writing and in the primary language of the home or parent/guardian preferred language, the rationale for its determination and provide parent/guardian with written notice of their rights to appeal the district's determination to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Pending any such appeal, the student should remain enrolled in the school selected by the parent or guardian, receiving transportation to school and access to other available services and programs.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Advisory on Homeless Education Assistance contains additional information about educating homeless students and the link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mv/haa/mckinney-vento.docx>

Homeless Liaison

The superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's liaison for homeless students and their parents/guardians. The district's liaison for homeless students shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their parents/guardians, other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of educational rights of homeless students in locations such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. The liaison shall ensure district staff receive professional development and other supports on issues involving homeless students.

First Reading:	November 3, 2005
Second Reading:	November 17, 2005
Third Reading:	Waived
Policy Adopted:	November 17, 2005
Policy Amended:	December 12, 2019
Policy Reviewed:	December 12, 2019
Legal References:	Title I, Part C, No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; The McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015
Policy Cross Reference:	
Procedure Reference:	