

1           **ADMISSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

2   In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Alexandria City School  
3   Board is committed to educating children and youth who are experiencing homelessness.  
4   Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) does not permit the stigmatization or segregation of  
5   students experiencing homelessness. Attendance in the ACPS is free to school-age persons living  
6   with a parent, guardian, or person *in loco parentis* (person acting in place of a parent by assuming  
7   the responsibility for care and supervision of a child which a parent would ordinarily exercise) in  
8   a temporary shelter, such as a hotel or motel, in the school division, not solely for school purposes.  
9   The school division coordinates the identification and provision of services to such students with  
10   relevant local social services agencies and other agencies and programs providing services to such  
11   students and with other school divisions as may be necessary to resolve interdivisional issues.

12   **Definitions**

13   The term “student experiencing homelessness” means an individual who lacks a fixed, regular,  
14   and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- 15   1) children and youth, including unaccompanied youths who are not in the physical custody of  
16   their parents, who:
- 17       a) are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or other  
18       causes; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of  
19       alternative adequate accommodations; or in emergency or transitional shelters; are  
20       abandoned in hospitals;
  - 21       b) have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or  
22       ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; or
  - 23       c) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or  
24       trains stations, or similar settings; and
- 25   2) migratory children who qualify as experiencing homelessness for the purposes of this policy  
26   because the children are living in circumstances described above.

27   The term “student experiencing homelessness” also includes students who are experiencing trauma  
28   or a lack of safety related to, or fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence,  
29   sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous, traumatic, or life-threatening conditions related to the  
30   violence against the student or a family member in the student’s or family’s current housing  
31   situation, including where the health or safety of children are jeopardized and who has no other  
32   safe residence and lacks the resources to obtain other safe permanent housing.

33   The term “migratory child” means a child who moved from one residence to another and from one  
34   school division to another in the preceding 36 months as a migratory agricultural worker or  
35   migratory fisher or with, or to join, as parent or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or  
36   a migratory fisher.

37   The term “school of origin” means the school that the student attended when permanently housed  
38   or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

39   The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or  
40   guardian.

41 **Services**

42 ACPS serves each student who is experiencing homelessness according to the student’s best  
43 interest and continues the student’s education;

- 44 ● in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness if the student experiences  
45 homelessness between academic years or during an academic year or for the remainder of  
46 the academic year if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year;
- 47 ● or enrolls the student in the same attendance-area public school as the student who is not  
48 experiencing homelessness.

49 In determining the best interest of the student who is experiencing homelessness, ACPS

- 50 ● presumes that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student’s best interest,  
51 except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student’s parent/guardian, or (in  
52 the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- 53 ● considers student-centered factors related to the student’s best interest, including  
54 factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety  
55 of homeless students, giving priority to the request of the student’s parent/guardian or  
56 (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- 57 ● if, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the  
58 presumption and the student-centered factors above, ACPS determines that it is not in  
59 the student’s best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the  
60 parent/guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, provides the  
61 student’s parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the  
62 reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such parent,  
63 guardian or unaccompanied youth, including information regarding the right to appeal;  
64 and
- 65 ● in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensures that the division’s Homeless Liaison  
66 assists in placement or enrollment decisions regarding the student, gives priority to the  
67 views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to  
68 appeal as described below.

69 **Enrollment**

70 The school selected in accordance with this policy immediately enrolls the student who is  
71 experiencing homelessness, even if the student

- 72 ● is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic  
73 records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or  
74 other documentation; or
- 75 ● has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

76 The enrolling school immediately contacts the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant  
77 academic and other records.

78 If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or other required health records, the enrolling school  
79 immediately refers the parent or legal guardian of the student or, (in the case of an unaccompanied  
80 youth) the youth, to the division’s Homeless Liaison, who assists in obtaining necessary  
81 immunizations or screenings, or immunization or other required health records.

82 If the documentation regarding the comprehensive physical examination required by Policy JHCA  
83 Physical Examination of Students cannot be furnished for a child or youth experiencing  
84 homelessness, and the person seeking to enroll the pupil furnishes to the school division an  
85 affidavit stating that the documentation cannot be provided because the child or youth is  
86 experiencing homelessness and also indicating that, to the best of their knowledge, such pupil is  
87 in good health and free from any communicable or contagious disease, the school division  
88 immediately refers the student to the division's Homeless Liaison who, as soon as practicable,  
89 assists in obtaining the necessary physical examination by the county or city health department or  
90 other clinic or physician's office and immediately admits the pupil to school.

91 The decision regarding placement is made regardless of whether the student lives with  
92 parents/guardians experiencing homelessness or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

### 93 **Enrollment Disputes**

94 If a dispute arises over eligibility, or school selection, or enrollment in the school:

- 95 ● the student who is experiencing homelessness is immediately enrolled in the school in  
96 which enrollment is sought and is provided all services for which they are eligible, pending  
97 resolution of the dispute;
- 98 ● the parent or guardian of the student or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth  
99 is provided with written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or  
100 enrollment made by the school, the school division, or the Virginia Department of  
101 Education, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision;
- 102 ● the student, parent, guardian is referred to the division's Homeless Liaison who carries out  
103 the appeal process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
- 104 ● in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison ensures that the youth is  
105 immediately enrolled in the school which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of  
106 the dispute.

### 107 **Appeal Process**

#### 108 *Oral Complaint*

109 In the event that an unaccompanied student or the parent or guardian of a student (hereinafter  
110 referred to as the Complainant) disagrees with a school's decision regarding the student's  
111 eligibility to attend the school, the Complainant orally presents their position to the division's  
112 Homeless Liaison.

#### 113 *Written Complaint*

114 If the disagreement is not resolved within five (5) school days, the Complainant may present a  
115 written complaint to the Homeless Liaison. The written complaint must include the following  
116 information: the date the complaint is given to the Homeless Liaison; a summary of the events  
117 surrounding the dispute; the name(s) of the school division personnel involved in the enrollment  
118 decision; and the result of the presentation of the oral complaint to the Homeless Liaison.

119 Within five (5) school days after receiving the written complaint, the Homeless Liaison will reach  
120 a decision regarding the contested enrollment and will provide a written statement of that decision,

121 including the reasons therefore, to the complainant. The liaison will inform the Superintendent of  
122 the formal complaint and its resolution.

123 **Appeal to Superintendent**

124 If the Complainant is not satisfied with the written decision of the Homeless Liaison, the  
125 Complainant may appeal that decision to the Superintendent by filing a written appeal. The  
126 Homeless Liaison ensures that the Superintendent receives copies of the written complaint and the  
127 response thereto. The Superintendent or designee schedules a conference with the Complainant to  
128 discuss the complaint. Within five (5) school days of receiving the written appeal, the  
129 Superintendent, or designee, provides a written decision to the complainant including a statement  
130 of the reasons therefore.

131 **Comparable Services**

132 Each student who is experiencing homelessness is provided services comparable to services  
133 offered to other students in the school attended by the student who is experiencing homelessness  
134 including the following:

- 135 ● transportation services
- 136 ● educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as services  
137 provided under Title I, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational  
138 programs for English learners;
- 139 ● programs in career and technical education;
- 140 ● programs for gifted and talented students; and
- 141 ● school nutrition programs.

142 **Transportation**

143 At the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Liaison),  
144 transportation will be provided for a student experiencing homelessness to and from the school of  
145 origin as follows:

- 146 ● if the child or youth experiencing homelessness continues to live in the area served by the  
147 division in which the school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to  
148 and from school of origin is provided or arranged by the division in which the school of  
149 origin is located.
- 150 ● if the child or youth experiencing homelessness' living arrangements in the area served by  
151 the division in which the school of origin are located terminated and the child or youth,  
152 though continuing his or her education in the school of origin, begins living in an area  
153 served by another division, the division of origin and the division in which the child or  
154 youth experiencing homelessness is living must agree upon a method to apportion the  
155 responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school  
156 of origin. If the divisions are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs  
157 for transportation will be shared equally.

158 Adopted: December 5, 1996

159 Amended: July 10, 1997

160 Amended: October 5, 2000

161 Amended: June 19, 2003  
162 Amended: June 15, 2004  
163 Amended: December 19, 2013  
164 Amended: June 18, 2015  
165 Amended: May 5, 2022  
166 Amended: October 5, 2023

167  
168 Legal Refs.: 20 U.S.C.§ 6399

169  
170 42 U.S.C. §§ 11302, 11431, 11432,11433, 11434a.

171  
172 Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, §§22.1-3, 22.1-70, 22.1 -78, 22.1-253.13:1,  
173 22.1-270.

174  
175  
176 Cross Refs.: JEC School Admission  
177 JHCA Physical Examinations of Students