

ADMISSION OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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

The Alexandria City Public Schools serves each student who is experiencing homelessness according to the student's best interest and continues the student's education;

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

In determining the best interest of the student who is experiencing homelessness, the Alexandria City Public Schools

- presumes that keeping the 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/guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- considers student-centered factors related to the student's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety of homeless students, giving priority to the request of the student's parent/guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- if, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the presumption and the student-centered factors above, the Alexandria City Public Schools determines that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, provides the student's parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth, including information regarding the right to appeal; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensures that the division's Homeless Liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions regarding the student, gives priority to the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal as described below.

Enrollment

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

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

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

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

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

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

Enrollment Disputes

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

- the student who is experiencing homelessness shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought and be provided all services for which he or she is eligible, pending resolution of the dispute;
- the parent or guardian of the student or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth is provided with written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by the school, the school division, or the Virginia Department of Education, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision;
- the student, parent, guardian is referred to the division's Homeless Liaison who carries out the appeal process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison ensures that the youth is immediately enrolled in the school which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of the dispute.

Appeal Process

Oral Complaint

In the event that an unaccompanied student or the parent or guardian of a student (hereinafter referred to as the Complainant) disagrees with a school's decision regarding the student's eligibility to attend the school, the Complainant shall orally present his/her position to the division's Homeless Liaison.

Written Complaint

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

Within five (5) school days after receiving the written complaint, the Homeless Liaison will reach a decision regarding the contested enrollment and shall provide a written statement of that decision, including the reasons therefore, to the complainant. The liaison will inform the Superintendent of the formal complaint and its resolution.

Appeal to Superintendent

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the written decision of the Homeless Liaison, the Complainant may appeal that decision to the Superintendent by filing a written appeal. The Homeless Liaison shall ensure that the Superintendent receives copies of the written complaint and the response thereto. The Superintendent or designee shall schedule a conference with the Complainant to discuss the complaint. Within five (5) school days of receiving the written appeal, the Superintendent, or designee, shall provide a written decision to the complainant including a statement of the reasons therefore.

Comparable Services

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

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

Transportation

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

- if the child or youth experiencing homelessness continues to live in the area served by the division in which the school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to and from school of origin shall be provided or arranged by the division in which the school of origin is located.
- if the child or youth experiencing homelessness' living arrangements in the area served by the division in which the school of origin are located terminated and the child or youth, though continuing his or her education in the school of origin, begins living in an area served by another division, the division of origin and the division in which the child or youth experiencing homelessness is living shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the divisions are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.

Definitions

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

- 1) children and youth, including unaccompanied youths who are not in the physical custody of their parents, who:
 - a) are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or other causes; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; or in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
 - b) 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; or
 - c) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or trains stations, or similar settings; and
- 2) migratory children who qualify as experiencing homelessness for the purposes of this policy because the children are living in circumstances described above.

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

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

The term "unaccompanied youth" includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Adopted: December 5, 1996
Amended: July 10, 1997
Amended: October 5, 2000
Amended: June 19, 2003
Amended: June 15, 2004
Amended: December 19, 2013
Amended: June 18, 2015
Revised: May 5, 2022

Legal Refs.: U.S.C.§ 6399
42 U.S.C. §§ 11302, 11431, 11432,11433, 11434a.
Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, §§[22.1-3](#), [22.1-70](#), [22.1 -78](#), [22.1-253.13:1](#),
[22.1-270](#).
[Superintendent’s Memo No. 64 \(Dec. 5, 2003\)](#)

Cross Refs.: JEC School Admission
JHCA Physical Examinations of Students