

TRUMBULL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
POLICY MANUAL

SECTION: **5000**
CATEGORY: **Students**
POLICY CODE: **5118.1/Homeless
Students**

HOMELESS STUDENTS

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Trumbull Board of Education to make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children and youths within the District, encourage their enrollment in school, and eliminate existing barriers to their education which may be present in District policies or practices, in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws. No child or youth shall be discriminated against in the District because of homelessness. Homeless children and youths residing within the District or residing in temporary shelters in the District shall be offered free school privileges in accordance with this policy and its regulations.

Homeless children and youths are federally defined as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This definition includes the following types of children and youths who are:

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 lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. abandoned in hospitals;
5. having 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;
6. living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or
7. migratory children living in the above described circumstances.

Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) §10-253(d) defines residency as children residing with relatives or non-relatives when it is the intention of such relatives or non-relatives and of the children or their parents or guardians that such residence is to be: (1) permanent; (2) provided without pay; and (3) not for the sole purpose of obtaining school accommodations. In addition, C.G.S. §10-253(e) indicates that a child in a temporary shelter is entitled to free school privileges from either the school district in which the shelter is located or from the school district in which the child would otherwise reside if not for the need for temporary shelter.

“Enroll” is federally defined to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

An “unaccompanied youth” is federally defined as a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

The District’s educational liaison for homeless children and youths is the Director of Pupil Personnel Services. The liaison must assist homeless children and youths, as described herein, in placement/enrollment decisions, considering the youth’s wishes, and provide notice of appeal under placement/enrollment disputes provisions. The liaison shall also participate in State-provided professional development programs for local liaisons.

The Superintendent shall develop regulations to ensure compliance with applicable statutes in the implementation of this policy.

Adopted: 3/14/2002
Revised: 5/6/2003, 2/14/2017,
1/9/2018, 1/14/2020

References

- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law 114-95
- The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

- Connecticut General Statutes §§ 10-186, 10-253(d), 10-253(e), 10-253(f), 17a-101, 17a-102, 17a-103, 17a-106, 46b-120
- Connecticut Public Act 17-194, “An Act Concerning Access to Student Records for Certain Unaccompanied Youths”
- Connecticut Public Act 19-179, “An Act Concerning Homeless Students’ Access to Education”

- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 5111: Eligibility to Attend Trumbull Public Schools
- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 5141.3: Health Assessments and Immunizations
- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 5141.4: Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Sexual Assault

Regulations

I. Enrollment and Placement

- A. Homeless children and youths, as defined by federal and state statutes, residing within the school district shall be entitled to free school privileges.
- B. A child or youth residing in a temporary shelter is entitled to free school privileges from the district in which the shelter is located or from the school district where the child or youth would otherwise reside if not for the placement in a temporary shelter. The district in which the temporary shelter is located shall notify the district where the child or youth would otherwise be attending. The district so notified may choose to either:
 - 1. continue to provide educational services, including transportation between the temporary shelter and the school in the home district; or
 - 2. pay tuition to the district in which the temporary shelter is located.
- C. Homeless children and youths within the district not placed in a shelter remain the district's responsibility in terms of the provision of continued educational services. Such services for such a child or youth may be:
 - 1. continued in the school ("school of origin") that the student attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment; or
 - 2. provided in the school that is attended by other students living in the same attendance area where the homeless child or youth lives.
- D. To the extent feasible, a homeless child or youth will be kept in the school of origin, unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian. If placement in the school of origin is not feasible, the homeless child or youth must be placed in the school that is attended by other students living in the same attendance area in which the homeless child lives.
- E. The District will provide a written explanation, including the right to appeal, whenever the District sends a homeless student to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.

II. Provision of Educational Services

- A. Homeless students shall not be separated from the mainstream environment on the basis of their homelessness. Such students shall have access to education and other services they need to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held. Homeless students shall be provided educational services that are comparable to those provided to other students enrolled in the District, including, but not limited to, Title I services, transportation services, compensatory educational programs, gifted and talented services, special education services, ELL services, health services, food and nutrition programs, and preschools operated by the District, if they meet the established criteria for these services.
- B. District administrators shall attempt to remove existing barriers to school attendance by homeless children and youths:

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1. The selected school for the homeless child or youth shall enroll the child or youth, even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. The last school in which the child or youth was enrolled shall be contacted to obtain records.
 2. Other enrollment requirements that may constitute a barrier to the education of the homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent. If the District is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the District shall administer tests or other reasonable means to determine the appropriate grade level for the child or youth.
 3. Fees and charges that may present a barrier to the enrollment or transfer of a homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent.
 4. Transportation services must be comparable to those provided other students in the selected school. Transportation shall be provided to the student's school of origin in compliance with federal and state regulations. If the school of origin is in a different school district from where the homeless child or youth is currently living, both school districts shall agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs equally.
 5. When a homeless student obtains permanent housing, enrollment in and transportation to the school of origin must be provided until the end of the academic year, if it is in the student's best interest to remain in that school.
 6. The homeless student's right to attend the school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness. When the homeless child or youth completes the final grade served by the school of origin, he/she is entitled to attend the designated receiving school for that feeder school of origin.
 7. Official school records policies and regulations shall be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent, in compliance with federal statutes.
 8. The District shall make a reasonable effort to locate immunization records from information available. The District's liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations and records. The District shall arrange for students to receive immunizations through health agencies and at District expense if no other recourse is available. Immunizations may, however, be waived for homeless children and youths only in accordance with provisions of Board Policy 5141.3, Health Assessments and Immunizations.
 9. Other barriers to school attendance by homeless children or youths may be waived at the discretion of the Superintendent.
- C. The District will treat information about a homeless child or youth's living situation as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Such information shall not be deemed to be directory information.
- D. Any homeless child or youth denied school accommodations shall continue in attendance or be immediately enrolled in the school selected by the child in the District. The

homeless child or youth or the parent/guardian of such homeless child or youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the reasons for the denial of accommodations in a manner and form understandable to such homeless child or youth or parent/guardian. Information shall also be provided regarding the right to appeal the decision of the denial of accommodations, and the homeless child or youth or the parent/guardian of such homeless child or youth shall be referred to the local educational liaison for homeless children and youths. The homeless child or youth shall be entitled to continue in attendance in the District during all available appeals. In addition, if a homeless child or youth is denied school accommodations, such homeless child or youth shall be entitled to a hearing conducted pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §10-186.

III. Specific Administrative Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent of Schools shall refer identified homeless children under the age of eighteen who may reside within the school district, unless such children are emancipated minors, to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.
- B. The Superintendent of Schools shall designate a staff person as a local educational liaison for homeless children and youths to carry out the duties described as follows:
 - 1. Ensure that homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies and entities.
 - 2. Ensure that homeless children are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the District's schools.
 - 3. Ensure that homeless families and homeless children and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start Programs and preschool programs administered by the District.
 - 4. Inform parents/guardians of homeless children and youths of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
 - 5. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children receive services in locations frequented by parents/guardians of such children and youths and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to parents/guardians of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths.
 - 6. Ensure that enrollment disputes related to homeless children and youths are mediated.
 - 7. Inform parents/guardians of homeless children and youths of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and how to access those services.

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8. Ensure that homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
9. Assist any unaccompanied youth in placement/enrollment decisions, including considering the youth's wishes in those decisions, and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal such decisions.
10. Assist homeless children and youths who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain the necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
11. Collaborate and coordinate with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
12. Indicate that a child or youth or his/her immediate family is eligible to participate in a local District program, and affirm such individual/family for the HUD homeless assistance program, presuming that the District liaison has received the mandatory training for such.
13. Provide the relevant State Coordinator the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to fulfill the federally required data collection.
14. Participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities as determined appropriate by the relevant State Coordinator.
15. Ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support.
16. Ensure that unaccompanied youths:
 - i. are enrolled in school;
 - ii. have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards the State has established for other children and youths; and
 - iii. are informed of their status as independent youths under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087VV) and that such youths may obtain assistance from the District to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
17. Coordinate special education services for homeless children and youths identified as eligible within the District.
18. Ensure that high school age homeless youths receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths on preparation and readiness for college.
19. Provide any unaccompanied youth full access to his/her educational records, including medical records, in the District's possession.

IV. Appeal Procedures

- A. C.G.S. §10-186 currently defines the process for resolving issues involving homeless children and youths. The State is required to establish an appeal process.
- B. In a dispute over eligibility, the child or youth shall immediately be enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- C. The District's homeless liaison is required to carry out the dispute resolution process expeditiously and, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- D. The parent/guardian shall be made aware of the right to appeal the decision to the Board of Education. The Board shall issue a written decision on the dispute within 30 days of the receipt of the appeal and hand-deliver the written decision and a notice of right-to-appeal to the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths to the parents/guardians, or student if applicable. The decision of the State Coordinator shall be final.