

Houston County Board of Education

Monitoring: Review: Annually, in April	Descriptor Term: <h2 style="text-align: center;">Homeless Students</h2>	Descriptor Code: <h3 style="text-align: center;">6.503</h3>	Issued Date: 02/11/19
		Rescinds:	Issued: 07/08/13

A homeless student shall have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths.¹

Homeless students are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.² Homeless students include:²

1. Students sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; students living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; students living in emergency or transitional shelters; or students abandoned in hospitals;
2. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Students living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or trains stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory students who are living in circumstances described above.

ENROLLMENT

Homeless students shall be immediately enrolled, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment (i.e. academic records, immunization records, health records, proof of residency) or missed the district’s application or enrollment deadlines.³ Parents/guardians are required to submit contact information to the district’s homeless coordinator.³

PLACEMENT

For the purposes of this policy, school of origin shall mean the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a preschool/pre-k program.⁴ School of origin shall also include the designated receiving school at the next grade level when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin.⁴

Placement shall be determined based on the student’s best interest.⁵ At all times, a strong presumption that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student’s best interest shall be maintained, unless doing so would be contrary to a request made by the student’s parent/guardian or the student in the case of an unaccompanied youth.⁶ When determining placement, student-centered factors, including, but not limited to, impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety, shall be considered.⁶ The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the student lives with their homeless parents/guardians or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.⁷

If it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the Director of Schools/designee shall provide a written explanation of the reasons for the determination, in a manner and form that is understandable to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.⁶ The written explanation shall include a statement regarding the right to appeal the placement decision.⁶ If the placement decision is appealed, the district shall refer the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student to the homeless coordinator who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible and in accordance with the law.⁸ Upon notice of an appeal, the Director of Schools shall immediately enroll the student in the school in which enrollment was sought pending a final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.⁸

RECORDS

Records ordinarily kept by the school shall be maintained for all homeless students. Information regarding a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record and shall not be considered directory information.⁹

SERVICES¹⁰

The Director of Schools shall ensure that each homeless student is provided services comparable to those offered to other students within the district, including transportation, special education services, programs in career and technical education (CTE), programs for gifted and talented students, and school nutrition.

The Director of Schools shall designate a district homeless coordinator who shall ensure this policy is implemented throughout the district. The homeless coordinator shall ensure:

1. Homeless students are quickly identified and have access to education and support services, to include Head Start and district pre-k programs;
2. Coordination with local social service agencies and other entities providing services to homeless students;
3. Coordinate transportation, transfer of records, and other interdistrict activities with other school districts;
4. Coordinate transportation to the school of origin or choice for homeless students;
5. Refer homeless students and their families to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, and housing services;
6. Assist homeless students in obtaining immunizations, medical or immunization records, and any additional assistance that may be needed;
7. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated in places frequented by parents/guardians of homeless students, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens; and
8. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled and informed of their status as independent students.

The Director of Schools shall develop procedures to ensure that homeless students are recognized administratively, and that the appropriate and available services are provided for these students. The Director of Schools shall ensure professional development is provided to school personnel providing services to homeless students.

Legal References

1. 42 USCA §§ 11431 to 11435; McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, § 721
2. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95), § 725
3. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(C)(i), § 722(g)(3)(H)
4. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(G)
5. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(A)
6. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(B)
7. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(F)
8. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(E)
9. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(3)(D)
10. McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA (Pub. L. 114-95, § 722(g)(4) - (6)

Cross References

- Student Transportation 3.400
- Parent and Family Engagement 4.502
- Promotion and Retention 4.603
- School Admissions 6.203
- Student Assignments 6.205
- Transfers Within the System 6.206
- Migrant Students 6.504