Lauderdale County Homeless Policy and Procedures

Admission Policy for Homeless, Migrants, Immigrant and EL students

Pursuant to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the 2001 NO Child Left Behind Act and the McKinney –Vento Homeless Assistance Act, all homeless children, migrants, immigrant, and English language learners must have equal access to the same free appropriate public education, including public preschool education, provided other children and youth. This shall be the policy of the Lauderdale County School System. Such children will be provided the opportunity to meet the same challenging state content and state student performance standards to which all students are held without being stigmatized or isolated.

The enrollment of homeless, migrant, immigrant, and limited English proficient children and youth shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records
- Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Unaccompanied; no guardian

A temporary social security number can be obtained by contacting Mr. John Mansell at the Lauderdale County Board of Education office. Homeless students have the right to enroll in school immediately, even if they do not have the required documents. Assistance will be provided to help parents obtain these necessary documents.

The Lauderdale County School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of homeless students.

Definition:
For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Lauderdale County School System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines homeless children and youth (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

- Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
  - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
  - living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
  - living in emergency or transitional shelters;
  - abandoned in hospitals; or
  - awaiting foster care placement

- Children and youth who 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.
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

The term unaccompanied youth includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing and children, youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as "throwaway" children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available.

The school of origin is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Homeless Education

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. The program will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academic and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non-homeless students.

The Lauderdale County School System has a policy that provides procedural guidelines to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrolment. All principals and counselors have been trained and know that there are to be no barriers to enrollment for homeless students. The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining the proper documentation.

The homeless education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the *school of origin* and providing them with transportation to and from the school or origin.

Lauderdale County Schools' federal programs coordinator works along with the homeless liaison to oversee program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided the opportunity for academic success. The coordinator has provided school counselors with referral forms for students who are homeless. The homeless liaison works closely with the counselors to provide homeless students the supplies they need for school. Funds may be used for school supplies, clothes, class fees, and transportation costs.

Identification and Registration Procedures for Homeless Students

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The district will conduct training sessions with the appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without using stigmatizing terminology. At the beginning of the school year all students will be given a *Student Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A)* to help determine the number and identity of homeless students. This form will be completed by the parent/guardian. Lauderdale County Schools will also help facilitate identity of homeless children and youth. A referral may be completed by school staff or parent/guardian. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the *Student Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A)* must be submitted to the Lauderdale County Schools Federal Programs Coordinator. The school will maintain the original form in a file separate from the student's permanent record for audit purposes during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor's office.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth *with or without proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record, or school records.* The school counselor or principal's designee will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the necessary records and documents for enrollment. Enrollment without the required immunization record will be pending receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation. The Attendance Supervisor will be called for assignment of a student number when a student enrolls without a social security number.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll himself or herself. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the Lauderdale County Schools Homeless Liaison to report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in language that the student understands. The Lauderdale County Schools Federal Programs Coordinator will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services. Requests for services can be made by completing the *Student Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A)*. Requests must be approved by the local principal and the federal programs coordinator.

The application process for free and reduced priced meals can be expedited for homeless children and youth.

School Placement of Homeless Students

Lauderdale County Schools will make school placement decisions in the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth. Students will continue in the *school of origin* for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. A homeless student may enroll in any public school where non-homeless students attend. The student will abide by the same requirements for attendance areas/zones as the non-homeless student.

If the school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth's parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a *Dispute Resolution Form* (*Appendix B*) with the school in which the student is presently enrolled. The principal of this school will notify the Lauderdale County Schools Federal Programs Coordinator and/or the homeless liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, Lauderdale County Schools will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution to the dispute. The Lauderdale County Schools Federal Programs Coordinator will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute (*Appendix B*). In the case that a dispute cannot be resolved, the parties involved will immediately notify the Federal Programs Department of the Alabama State Department of Education.

Appendix A

Student Residency Questionnaire

Name of School _____

Name of Student _____ Sex: □ Male
Last First MI □ Female

Birth Date _____/_____/_____ Age _____ Grade _____
MM/ DD/ YYYY

This questionnaire is intended to address the McKinney-Vento Act 42 U.S.C. 11435. The answers to this residency information help determine services the student may be eligible to receive. Information provided on this form is confidential.

Check the following living situation that applies to the student named above:

_____ Living in own home, rented home, or apartment

_____ Living with friends or relatives temporarily due to loss of housing or economic hardship

_____ Living in a shelter (emergency/transitional)

_____ Living in a hotel/motel/campground or other similar situation

_____ Unaccompanied youth (alone with no adult)

_____ Other (Please explain)_____

The undersigned certifies that the information provided above is accurate.

_____
Printed name of parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth

_____ Date _____
Signature of parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth

* Please return this completed form to your school or the Lauderdale County Board of Education office located at 355 County Road 61 Florence, Alabama 35634, Attention: Title I Supervisor.

Appendix B

Lauderdale County School System
Dispute Resolution
Final District Decision Form

Student Name:	**School Name:**
Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Name:	**Relationship to Student:**
Street Address (City, State, Zip):	**Phone Number:**

Base on the investigation conducted by Student Support Services, it has been determined that the above named student _____**IS** or _____**IS NOT** (check one) entitled to enrollment in and/or transportation to the above named school due to the following reason(s):

_____

_____

_____

_____

You may appeal this decision to the Alabama State Department of Education within three working days. If you do not file an appeal, the district's decision will go into effect on _____.
(date)

If you would like to appeal this decision, you must complete the appeal information below. For help completing the appeal, please contact Valerie Thigpen, Homeless Liaison at 256-757-2101. If you are an unaccompanied youth and would like to file an appeal, the Homeless Liaison must help you.

_____ _____

Gina Baggett (Date)
Federal Programs Director

Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education

I understand that I have the right to appeal the district's decision to deny enrollment of my child to the requested school and that my right to appeal must be exercised within three working days of the above date. I understand that the above student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if feasible) until the State makes a determination (within ten days).

Based on the explanation provided:

_____I do not wish to appeal this decision.

_____I wish to appeal this decision to the Alabama State Department of Education. Please forward this information to:

LaDonna Rudolph
Alabama State Department of Education
Federal Programs
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36130
1-888-725-9321 (toll free)