

**Policy  
PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS****Descriptor Code: IGBCA**

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The Ava R-I School District Board of Education recognizes that homeless students are particularly vulnerable and need special assistance to access and benefit from the education environment. Therefore, the district, in accordance with state and federal law and the Missouri state plan for education of the homeless, will give special attention to ensure that homeless students in the district are promptly identified and have access to a free and appropriate public education and related support services.

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

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

**District Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths**

The Board designates the following individual to act as the district's liaison for homeless children and youths (district liaison):

Director of Special Services

507 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

Ava, MO 65608

Phone: 417-683-3809/Fax: 417-683-4227

The district liaison shall designate and train another district employee to serve as the district liaison in the absence of the district liaison.

**School of Origin**

For the purposes of this policy, "school of origin" is defined as the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled,

including a public preschool. When the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term shall then include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

### **Enrollment**

The selected school shall immediately enroll the homeless student even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization or other health records, proof of residency, or other documentation, and even if the student has missed any application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Outstanding fines, fees or absences shall not present a barrier to enrollment of the student. However, the district may require a parent/guardian of a homeless student to submit contact information.

Immediately upon identifying the student as being eligible for homeless services, the selected school shall ensure that the student is attending class and participating fully in school activities.

### **Placement**

The district will consider the best interest of the homeless student, with parental involvement, in determining whether he or she should be enrolled in the school of origin or the school that nonhomeless students who live in the attendance area in which the homeless student is actually living are eligible to attend. In determining the best interest of the student, the district will:

1. Presume 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. If the homeless student is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, the district liaison will consider the views of the homeless student in deciding where he or she will be educated.
2. Consider 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 homeless student's parent/guardian or the unaccompanied student.

The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the homeless student lives with his or her parents/guardians or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

If the district determines that placement should be in the school of origin, the student will continue his or her education in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness when the student's family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, and for the remainder of the academic year even if the student becomes permanently housed during the academic year.

If the district determines that it is not in the best interest of the student to attend either the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student, the district shall provide a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be given in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians or

unaccompanied student and shall include information regarding the right to appeal the district's determination.

If the student is unaccompanied, the district liaison shall assist the student in placement or enrollment decisions, shall give priority to the views of the student, and shall provide the student with notice of his or her right to appeal the district's decision.

## **Services**

Each homeless student shall be provided services comparable to the services offered to other students in the district including, but not limited to, transportation services; education services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as education programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and gifted students; programs in career and technical education; school nutrition programs; preschool programs; before- and after-school care programs; and programs for English learners. Homeless students will not be segregated in a separate school or program within a school based on the students' status as homeless.

The district will coordinate services for homeless students with local social service agencies and other agencies or entities providing services to homeless students and their families, including services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. The district will also coordinate transportation, transfer of school records and other interdistrict activities with other school districts.

## **Transportation**

If the homeless student's school of origin, including a public preschool, and temporary housing are located in the Ava R-I School District, the district will provide transportation to and from the school of origin at the request of the parent/guardian or district liaison, provided it is in the best interest of the student.

If the homeless student's school of origin and temporary housing are located in two different school districts, the districts may agree on a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing transportation to the school of origin. If no agreement is reached, the districts will equally share the responsibility and costs for transporting the student. If a homeless student becomes permanently housed in the middle of the school year, the district will continue to provide transportation to the school of origin for the remainder of the school year.

Transportation to the school of origin shall be provided even if a homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool moves to another district that does not provide a widely available or universal preschool.

## **Records**

When a homeless student enrolls in the district or a district school, the district will immediately contact the school the homeless student last attended in order to obtain academic or other relevant records.

Any records ordinarily kept by the school for each homeless student (including immunization or other health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs) shall be maintained so that the district is equipped to provide the student with appropriate services, make necessary referrals and transfer records in a timely fashion when a homeless student enters a new school district. Copies of records shall be made available upon request to students or parents/guardians in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record and shall not be deemed to be directory information under FERPA.

### **Responsibilities of District Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths**

The district liaison will attend all required professional development and other technical assistance activities as determined appropriate by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The district shall inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the district liaison. The district liaison will ensure that:

1. Homeless students, including homeless preschool-age children, are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the district.
3. Homeless families and students have access to and receive education services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and Early Head Start, early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and preschool programs administered by the district, as well as referrals to healthcare services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services based on their assessed needs.
4. The parents/guardians of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated in locations frequented by parents/guardians, youth and unaccompanied youth, including schools, family shelters, public libraries and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians and youth.
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law.
7. The parents/guardians of homeless students and unaccompanied students are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation to the selected school.

8. Unaccompanied students will be assisted in placement or enrollment decisions, their views will be considered, and they will be provided notice of the right to appeal.
9. School personnel providing services to homeless students and their parents/guardians receive professional development and other support.
10. Unaccompanied students:
  - ▶ Are enrolled in school;
  - ▶ Have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards that are established for other students; and
  - ▶ Are informed of their status as independent students under laws applicable to higher education and that they may obtain assistance from the district liaison in order to receive verification of this status for the purposes of applying for federal student aid.
11. Students who need to obtain immunizations or medical or immunization records will receive assistance.
12. The district collects and reports reliable, valid and comprehensive data to DESE regarding homeless students.
13. All homeless high school students receive information and individualized counseling regarding college readiness, college selection, the application process, financial aid and the availability of on-campus supports.
14. Every effort is made to enroll preschool-age homeless children in preschool if they are not already enrolled.

### **Disputes**

Parents/Guardians or unaccompanied youth may appeal district decisions regarding eligibility, enrollment or placement in accordance with the Standard Complaint Resolution Process adopted by DESE.

1. Parents/Guardians or unaccompanied youth will submit disputes to the district liaison, who will carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible. The liaison will provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth a written explanation of any decisions relating to eligibility, enrollment or placement. The written explanation will include:
  - ▶ A description of the action proposed or refused by the district;
  - ▶ An explanation of why the action was proposed or refused;
  - ▶ A description of any other options the school considered;
  - ▶ The reasons other options were rejected;
  - ▶ A description of any other relevant factors to the district's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination including the facts, witnesses and evidence relied upon and their sources;
  - ▶ Appropriate timelines to ensure any relevant deadlines are not missed; and
  - ▶ Contact information for the local liaison and the state coordinator for homeless children and youth (state coordinator) and a brief description of their respective roles.
2. The liaison will discuss the explanation with the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth and answer any related questions.
3. If the explanation provided to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth does not resolve the dispute, the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth should notify the liaison, who will provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with the standard state complaint resolution process and ensure that the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth has the contact information for the state coordinator. If requested, the liaison will assist any unaccompanied youth in submitting the appeal.

The student will remain enrolled and will be allowed to attend and fully participate in all school activities during the dispute process.

If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth are English learners, use a native language other than English, or need additional supports due to a disability, the district shall make translators, interpreters or other support services available without charge and in the appropriate language.

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**Note: The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.**

Ava R-I

Date Adopted: 6/21/2007  
Last Revised: 2/16/2017

**Policy Reference**

**Description**

JCC-1	<a href="#"><u>INTERDISTRICT TRANSFERS</u></a>
KLA	<a href="#"><u>CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS REGARDING FEDERAL PROGRAMS</u></a>
EEA	<a href="#"><u>STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES</u></a>
JCB	<a href="#"><u>INTRADISTRICT TRANSFERS</u></a>
JEC	<a href="#"><u>SCHOOL ADMISSIONS</u></a>
JECA-1	<a href="#"><u>ADMISSION OF STUDENTS</u></a>
JECC-1	<a href="#"><u>ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS TO GRADE LEVELS/CLASSES</u></a>
JFH	<a href="#"><u>STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES</u></a>
JHCB	<a href="#"><u>IMMUNIZATION OF STUDENTS</u></a>
KL	<a href="#"><u>PUBLIC CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS</u></a>

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