

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

No. 542

Board of Trustees
Douglas County School District

STUDENTS

**PLAN FOR SERVING STUDENTS IN TRANSITION (SIT)
& UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH**
(Homeless Children)

The District is committed to providing homeless children the opportunities to achieve the same high-quality academic standards expected of all children enrolled in the Douglas County School District.

Definition of Homeless

The term "homeless" or "homeless individual" includes:

- an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence;
- an individual who has primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter for the accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
- an individual who sleeps in a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (e.g., cars, parks, motels);
- children living with a parent in a domestic violence shelter;
- an individual who is, out of necessity, living with relatives or friends due to lack of housing;
- runaway children (under 18 years of age) and children and youths who have been abandoned or forced out of the home by parents or other caretakers, or such youth (between 1 and 20 years of age) who may still be eligible for educational services who:
 - temporarily reside in shelters awaiting assistance from social service agencies;
 - live alone on the street or move from place to place between family members, friends, or acquaintances; and
 - children of migrant families who lack adequate housing.

(Stewart B. McKinney Act, Section 103[a] [1] [2])

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Students in Transition (Homeless Children) Procedures

The Douglas County School District McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act Procedures Manual' has been created to provide instructions and guidance when identifying, enrolling, and providing services to Students in Transition (SIT) and unaccompanied youth. The procedures manual provides the most current information based on federal and state guidelines.

The following procedures are intended to assist a homeless child or youth to enroll and succeed in the Douglas County School District:

Federal, State, and District Compliance

The District's Assistant Superintendent for Education Services (or his designee) will:

- monitor documents and procedures for compliance with Federal, State, and District requirements and guidelines;
- develop the District homeless program procedures and act as liaison with the state coordinator for the homeless;
- designate school site advocates to work with the District's homeless liaison in order to ease barriers to school enrollment and provide school success for children in transition with the schools.

Enrollment

- Schools must immediately enroll children and youth in homeless situations, even when records normally required for enrollment are not available.
- Students may stay in their school of origin, if feasible (in their best interest).
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth must be posted in every public school and in appropriate places throughout the community.
- Unaccompanied youth must be provided educational access through the support of the local homeless education liaison.

Attendance and Success

Students with appropriate support are more likely to attend school on a regular basis. Attendance is critical if school success is to be realized. School districts must provide appropriate case management to ensure students have access to all educational services to which they are eligible.

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- Students experiencing homelessness must receive services comparable to those of housed students.
- Transportation to the school of origin must be provided, when appropriate.
- Social service agencies and school districts must work together to serve students.
- Families and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness must be fully informed of available enrollment options and educational opportunities.
- Schools must provide written explanations of placement decisions and the enrollment dispute process.
- Separate schools or programs for children and youth experiencing homelessness are prohibited, with the exception of several programs specifically named in the McKinney-Vento Act.

Schools will comply with the following procedures for enrolling students in transition:

- Birth certificates, immunization documentation, and previous school records may not be readily available from homeless children new to the District.
 - Families should be referred to the school's nurse if immunization is not current. The previous school district may fax a copy of current immunizations. DCSD will provide or facilitate the student receiving current immunizations.
 - DCSD will provide or facilitate the student receiving a copy of their birth certificate if none is available from the parent. Certified copies of birth certificates are found at the State Vital Records Department. The department can supply addresses of out-of-state offices of vital records.
- By definition, homeless individuals lack a permanent address. A permanent address is not required for school enrollment. If no address exists (i.e., living in an automobile), attempt to secure a name, phone number, and address for emergency notification. Homeless students may not be bound by zoning requirements. When homeless students move from one school zone to another, consideration must be made as to which school they should attend, the one they have been attending or the one zoned for their new residence. The school and parents should take into consideration the number of times the students have transferred schools, the distance and travel time from their residence to the school they have been attending, and their success in the school they have been attending.

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- When a homeless child is admitted to a school, the school site advocate, teacher(s), counselor, and nurse should be notified.
- For children in transition, registration forms should be processed so that the children may begin school immediately.

School Withdrawal and Tracking Responsibilities

The following is a list of school responsibilities:

- If a transfer is necessitated and the new school is known at the time of withdrawal, contact the new school to advise of the transfer in progress and when to expect the new student.
- When a homeless child is absent for unknown reasons, contact the family, shelter manager, or call the emergency contact number.
- The school nurse at the receiving school should be notified of any homeless child with special health care needs.

Transportation

- To the extent feasible, a homeless student who has moved from one attendance area to another may continue to attend the school the student was attending prior to or when they first became homeless (school of origin). In order to make this possible, the District's transportation department and District liaison will work with schools to facilitate transportation.

Nutritional Services

For homeless students in need of nutritional services, please note the following:

- Transfer students who have been previously qualified to receive free or reduced price meals at any Douglas County School District school during the current school year will continue their eligibility status at the next school. School Nutrition Program (SNP) office is to be notified of such transfer to facilitate immediate continuation of services.
- When a complete application is submitted to the school office for "homeless" students, an approval with the SNP office can be secured immediately with services beginning the next meal served (if eligible).

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Application will be forwarded to the SNP office and a copy of the approval is to be sent home to the parents.

- To the extent feasible, homeless kindergarten children should be fed a free lunch (and breakfast, if it is offered at the school) daily.

Health Services

- Every effort should be made to reduce duplication of health services. Dates for immunization and boosters should be diligently sought and made available to schools in a timely manner.
- All homeless students should be tracked so those enrollment barriers due to a lack of medical records and issues related to communicable diseases may be alleviated. This also will help ensure that needed health services are provided, but not duplicated.

Counseling and Personal Adjustment

Issues related to personal adjustments are a responsibility of all who come in regular contact with the homeless student including the student's counselor, teacher, and school advocate for the homeless. To this end, the schools should:

- develop and implement strategies to encourage socialization for homeless children such as establishing a "buddy system" within schools;
- reach out to parents of homeless children to encourage participation in special programs such as tutoring. Also, provide fee waivers for activity fees and PE clothes if needed.
- convene multi-disciplinary building meetings (e.g., child study meetings and student assistance program meetings) to include parents, the principal, the school's homeless advocate, and the child's teacher and counselor to discuss the student's living conditions and its effects on the child's performance in school. Identify and coordinate resources needed for the child in a timely manner.

Principals and school site homeless advocates will collaborate with District attendance officers to facilitate consistent school attendance of homeless students.

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Assessment and Special Services

- Depending on previous educational history and documentation, administer (within the first week of school) a quick educational screening.
- If needed, notify special services to expedite the administration of additional assessments.

Communication and Collaboration

The District's Assistant Superintendent for Education Services (or his or her designee) and the District's homeless liaison will:

- offer information that includes strategies to encourage socialization and success of homeless children within a caring school environment.
- sensitize school personnel to the school's information on the homeless students.
- disseminate and distribute information on the homeless to schools, including information about local services for homeless families.
- provide outreach to social service agencies on educational issues related to the homeless.

All school personnel who interact with homeless children or who have responsibilities for services appropriate to the needs of homeless children will:

- coordinate and collaborate with community agencies providing basic nutritional, health, and social services to homeless children and their families.
- work as advocates on behalf of homeless children and youth in Douglas County to make education relevant for all homeless children.

Teachers at each school site will communicate school supply needs and other concerns regarding homeless children to their principal and school site homeless advocate.

[See Policy related to this Administrative Regulation](#)

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