

SALEM SCHOOL DISTRICT
Salem, Connecticut

STUDENTS

HOMELESS STUDENTS

In order to appropriately implement the policy pertaining to homeless children, youth and students placed in shelters, in compliance with all applicable federal and state statutes, the following procedures are established.

Definitions:

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

- a. sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- b. living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- c. living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- d. abandoned in hospitals;
- e. 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;
- f. living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- g. migratory children living in the above described circumstances.

Connecticut's residency definitions contained in C.G.S. 10-235(d) defines non-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 children in temporary shelters are 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. The district has an obligation to identify homeless and migratory children.

District Obligations Regarding Placement of Homeless Students:

- a) District policy must remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children, including such barriers as outstanding fees, fines or absences.
- b) The District must continue the student's education in the "school of origin" which is the school the child attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment. The District must presume that keeping a homeless child in the school of origin is in the child's best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the individuals' parent/guardian. OR
- c) The District must enroll the homeless student in the Salem School or East Lyme High School where non-homeless students who live in the area where the child is actually living are eligible to attend. The school selected based on a homeless child's best interest shall immediately enroll such child even if he/she missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

- d) The District is required, "to the extent feasible" to keep the homeless child in the school of origin unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian. If the District determines that it is not in the child's best interest to attend the school of origin, the District will provide a written explanation of its determining reasons.
- e) The homeless child's right to attend the school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness. When the child completes the final grade served by the school of origin; it also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for all feeder schools.
- f) If a child becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he/she is entitled to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- g) A child who becomes homeless in between academic years is entitled to attend his/her school of origin for the following academic year.
- h) The District must provide written explanation, including the right to appeal, whenever the school District sends the homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian.
- i) With an "unaccompanied youth," the District's homeless liaison must assist in the placement/enrollment decisions, considering the youth's wishes, and provide notice of appeal under the Act's enrollment disputes provision.
- j) The District's liaison must participate in professional development and technical assistance provided by the State Office of the Homeless Coordinator.
- k) The definition of "school origin" includes preschools operated by a local school district.
- l) Information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record, subject to FERPA protections and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Appeal Procedures: (enrollment disputes)

- a. C.G.S. 10-186 currently defines the process for resolving issues involving homeless students. The state is required to establish an appeal process.
- b. In a dispute over eligibility the child shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- c. The District's homeless liaison shall 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.

Educational Services to be Provided to Homeless Students:

- a. Educational services are to be comparable to those received by other students in the school.
- b. Such students may be entitled to such services as Title I, state/local remedial programs, special education, limited English proficiency, vocational education, gifted/talented and school nutrition programs.
- c. Homelessness alone is not to be considered a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.
- d. Homeless students may be segregated for short periods of time only for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special or supplemental services.

Transportation Obligations of the School District for Homeless Students:

- a. Services must be comparable to those provided other students in the selected school.

- b. Homeless students must be provided transportation to the school of origin, if requested by the parent/guardian, if the school is within the school district.
- c. When the school of origin is in a different school district from where the child is currently living, both school districts are to agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs and responsibility equally.
- d. When a student obtains permanent housing, 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.

Enrollment Requests from Homeless Parents:

- a. The selected school is required to immediately enroll the child, even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. Parents/guardians may be required to submit information.
- b. The last school attended must be contacted to obtain records.
- c. If the child lacks immunizations or immunization/medical records, the enrolling school **MUST** refer the parent/guardian to the liaison in order to get help obtaining immunizations and records.

Privacy:

- a. Schools must treat information about a homeless child's living situation as a student education record subject to all protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- b. Such information shall not be deemed to be directory information.

District Liaison for Homeless Students:

The District's liaison for homeless students is the Superintendent.

The duties of the local liaison are:

- a. Ensure homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination with other agencies and entities.
- b. Ensure homeless children are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school district's schools.
- c. Ensure that homeless families and homeless children receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start Programs and preschool programs administered by the District.
- d. Inform parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- e. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth is in locations frequented by parents/guardians of such children and unaccompanied youth, including schools and public libraries in a manner and form understandable to parents/guardians of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youth.
- f. Ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated.
- g. Inform parent/guardian of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing those services.
- h. 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.

- i. Assist 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.
- j. Assist children who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- k. Collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children.
- l. Indicate that a child or youth or his/her immediate family is eligible to participate in a local district program and authorized to affirm such individual/family for the HUD homeless assistance program. (This qualification can be done provided the District liaison has received the mandatory training.)
- m. Provide the State Coordinator the reliable, valid and comprehensive data needed to fulfill the federally required data collection.
- n. Participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined appropriate by the State of Connecticut.
- o. Ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless children and youth receive professional development and other support and 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 youth; 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 youth may obtain assistance from the District to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- p. Coordinate special education services for homeless children and youth identified as eligible within the local District.

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