

**HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES**

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District (“Corporation”) will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided Corporation services for which they are eligible, including Title I, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Are abandoned in hospitals;
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
7. Are migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be informed of the Corporation’s decision and their appeal rights in writing. The Corporation’s Liaison will carry out the dispute resolution as provided by state rule.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to Corporation policies. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the Corporation Liaison is directed to assist in this process. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to Corporation policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with corporation policies. No homeless student shall be denied enrollment due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. Moreover, the Corporation shall ensure that homeless children who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities including summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, or online learning.

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in the Corporation, including:

- A. transportation services;
- B. educational services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or similar State or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;
- C. programs in vocational and technical education;
- D. programs for high ability students;
- E. school nutrition programs; and
- F. before-and-after school programs.

The Corporation shall work with the homeless student's parents or guardian (or unaccompanied youth) to determine which school the student will attend based on the best interest of the student. School of Origin is defined as the school that the child attended when permanently housed, the school in which the child was last enrolled, including a preschool, or the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools when the child has completed the final grade served by the school of origin. In determining the best interest of the student, the Corporation shall presume the School of Origin is in the homeless student's best interest except when contrary to the request of the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

The Board requires that these rights and the dispute process be communicated to the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth.

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth of the rights described above, the Corporation shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness in each school, and at locations frequented by parents or guardians and unaccompanied youths, in a manner and form understandable to them.

The Superintendent will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as assigned by the Superintendent and proscribed by law. Liaison will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities as determined appropriate by the State Coordinator. The Liaison will ensure that:

- a. Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- b. Homeless children and youth are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed within the Corporation;

- c. School personnel providing McKinney-Vento services receive sufficient professional development and other support;
- d. Homeless families and youth receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
- e. Homeless families and youth have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible including through the Head Start Act and other preschool programs.
- f. That school personnel, service providers, advocates working with homeless families, parents, guardians and homeless children and youths are informed of the duties of the Liaison.
- g. Parents and guardians of homeless youth are informed of educational and related opportunities and are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- h. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act.
- i. Parents and guardians of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the School of Origin and are assisted in accessing transportation services.
- j. Unaccompanied youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same state academic standards as established for other children and youths, are informed of the status of unaccompanied youths as independent students under section 40 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20U.S.C. 1087vv), and the rights of unaccompanied youths to receive verification of this status from the local Liaison.

The homeless Liaison will assist, to the extent feasible, the homeless students and their parent(s) or guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their School of Origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the homeless student continues to live in the Corporation in which the School of Origin is located, transportation will be provided in accordance with Corporation policy. If the School of Origin is in a different school corporation, or a homeless student is living in another school corporation but will attend his or her School of Origin in this corporation, the two school corporations will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

All records for homeless students shall be maintained so that they are available in a timely fashion and can be transferred promptly as necessary. All records regarding a homeless student shall be treated as a student education record consistent with Corporation Policy. Further, a homeless child's living situation shall not be deemed directory information.

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District

Adopted: July 22, 2024