Catasauqua Area School District
Notice of Public Rights of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Responsibilities
The Catasauqua Area School District is committed to preserving the best interest of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Whenever feasible, CASD will minimize the effects of mobility on homeless students by maintaining a stable education environment.

CASD is responsible for enrolling children and youth experiencing homelessness in the school that is in his or her best interest, and for providing prompt and sensitive service to parents and children who need assistance.

Definition of Homelessness
According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, students are considered homeless if they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, even if the temporary residence is outside CASD. Students living under the following conditions may be considered homeless:

- Living with friends or relatives due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, or trailer parks used to house homeless families
- Living in an emergency shelter or transitional shelter
- Living in camping grounds
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, buses, or train stations
- Foster children awaiting foster care placement
- Unaccompanied youth (any child who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) who may be living in a shelter, inadequate housing, or denied housing by family

Homeless students have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents
- Enroll in the School of Residence (the school district in which the current residence is located), or continue attending the School of Origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), according to each student's best interest
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to each student's needs

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Where will my child go to school?
Appropriate school placement arrangements, based on the child's best interest, will be implemented through the cooperative efforts of the respective chief school administrators. Each case presents a unique set of circumstances and, therefore, requires an individualized response. CASD shall attempt to minimize disruptions and shall maintain the highest possible degree of continuity in programs for all homeless students. The decision about which school your child attends should be made after considering the following such factors and determining the best interest of the child or youth under the McKinney-Vento Act:

- Age of child
- Special needs of child
- Continuity of instruction
- Time of school year
- Length of stay in temporary nighttime location
- Time and distance to transport your child to and from school
- Domestic violence

You have the right to decide whether it is best for your child to:

- Stay in the same school he or she attended before becoming homeless (School of Origin); or
- Attend the school serving your temporary nighttime location (School of Residence)

If the school your child attended before becoming homeless (School of Origin) is in CASD, your child may continue to attend that school unless:

- You decide it would be better for your child to transfer to the school serving your temporary nighttime location (School of Residence); or
- We believe there is a good reason for your child to transfer to the School of Residence based on the factors listed above

If the School or Origin and/or School of Residence is outside CASD, we will need to involve that school in deciding which school your child will attend and in setting up transportation.

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How do I enroll my child in CASD?
Your child has the right to be enrolled in school without delay. You will need to complete the online enrollment forms on the CASD website or at our administration office. Students experiencing homelessness have the right to immediate enrollment, even when lacking:

- Proof of residency
- 1302 not required
- Guardianship
- Birth certificates, school records, or other documents
- Medical records, including immunization records
- Required dress code items, including uniforms

The parent/guardian shall make their best effort to provide the previously listed documents after enrollment has begun.

What is the Dispute Resolution Process?
If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the child or youth involved must immediately be admitted to the school in which they are seeking enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute. A written explanation must be given if enrollment is denied. The parent/guardian or Unaccompanied Youth must also be informed of his/her right to appeal the school's decision.

- Level 1 - A dispute may be raised with an LEA.
- Level 2 - A complaint may be filed with a McKinney-Vento coordinator.

How will my child get to school?
Transportation will be provided or arranged for homeless students when requested, except for walkers. School staff will assist in arranging transportation. If your child misses school due to lack of transportation, the absence will be excused. If a homeless student becomes permanently housed during the school year, he or she will continue to receive transportation until the end of that school year.

Are there any other resources available?
Your child will receive breakfast and lunch on the first day, and is automatically eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Additionally, the school will provide you with information on any other programs for which your child is eligible.

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What is the role of the CASD Homeless Liaison?
The CASD Homeless Liaison can help with the following:

- Identify students experiencing homelessness
- Inform parents/guardians and youth of their rights
- Disseminate public notice of McKinney-Vento rights in schools and agencies around the district
- Use the Enrollment Dispute Process as delineated in the BEC
- Inform families of all transportation options
- Ensure immediate enrollment
- Assist with obtaining documentation such as immunization records
- Understand state guidance and the BEC and relate this to district staff
- Become familiar with community resources for shelter, food, clothing, etc.
- Distribute information and arrange training for various district staff including office personnel
- Provided standard enrollment procedures to shelters in your area
- Become familiar with available program materials
- Collaborate with special education programs to ensure IDEA rights for students experiencing homelessness
- Identify preschool aged children, especially when enrolling a new family
- Identify and conduct outreach while respecting families' rights to privacy

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Resources

- Education for Homeless Youth BEC (https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/resources/policies-acts-and-laws/basic-education-circulars-becs/us-code/education-for-homeless-youth.html)
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/)
- CASD Board Policy #253 (https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1705927574/cattysdorg/fuszxgetus2jft4dnv80/253.pdf)
- CASD McKinney-Vento Informational Site (https://www.cattysd.org/superintendents-office/pa-homeless-childrens-initiative-mckinney-vento-act)
- ECYEH Homeless Liaison Directory (https://directory.center-school.org/homeless/?page=liaison)
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (https://naehcy.org/)
- SchoolHouse Connection (https://schoolhouseconnection.org/)
- Finding Your Way in PA (https://findingyourwayinpa.com/)

Contacts

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