

RSU #63

- a. **NEPN/NSBA Code:** JFABD
- b. **Title:** Admission and Education of Homeless Students
- c. **Author:** Director of Special Services
- d. **Replaces Policy:**
- e. **Date Approved:** 02/28/2022 RSU #63
- f. **Previously Approved:** 01/25/2016
- g. **Policy Expiration:** Review as Needed
- h. **Responsible for Review:** Director of Special Services, Superintendent, & Policy Committee
- i. **Date Reviewed:** 01/31/2022 Director of Special Services
01/23/2022 Superintendent
02/07/2022 Policy Committee
- j. **References:** 42 USC Ch. 11431-11435,
DOE Rules, Ch 14
20-A MRSA §§ 1 (13-A), 261, 5151-5164, 5207(7)
McKinney-Vento Act
- k. **Narrative:**

I. The RSU #63 Board of Directors (the Board) recognizes that homelessness alone will not be a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. RSU #63 (the District) will strive to ensure qualified homeless students are identified and provided access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students in the District. In accordance with the federal and state law and regulations, the District will provide homeless students (identified as homeless following the McKinney-Vento Act) with access to the instructional programming that supports achievement of the content standards of Maine’s system of Learning Results and to other services for which they are eligible. Students will not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless, nor will they be stigmatized in any way.

II. Definitions:

- A. “Homeless students” are those 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 adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
 - 2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations 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.

B. “School of origin” means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

C. “Unaccompanied youth” refers to a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

D. “Homeless liaison” is the Director of Special Services.

III. Enrollment/Placement

A. The District will determine, according to the best interest of the child or youth, whether the child or youth will be enrolled in the school of origin or in the public school that non-homeless students, who live in the attendance area in which the child is actually living, are eligible to attend. In determining the best interest of the child or youth, the District will, to the extent feasible, keep the child or youth in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent.

B. If the youth is unaccompanied by the parent/guardian, the homeless liaison will assist in placement and enrollment decisions, with the views of the youth taken into consideration.

C. The school selected will immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization records, evidence of residency, or other documentation.

D. The District requires a parent/guardian of a homeless child or youth to provide contact information.

E. The District must provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the parent/guardian of the homeless child or youth if the school unit sends the child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or other than a school requested by the parent/guardian.

F. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison will provide notice of the right to appeal.

G. The enrolling school will contact the last school attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic or other records. If the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations or immunization or medical records, the parent/guardian of the homeless child or youth will be referred to the homeless liaison for assistance.

IV. Enrollment Disputes:

- A. If there is a dispute concerning enrollment, the child or youth will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending the resolution of the dispute. The parent/guardian will be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision and the right to appeal.
- B. The homeless liaison will ensure an unaccompanied youth is enrolled in school, pending resolution of a dispute.

V. Services:

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to services available to other students in the District including, but not limited to, transportation services; educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and students with limited English proficiency; vocational and technical programs; before and after school-care programs; and school meals/nutrition programs.

VI. Transportation:

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in another school unit and the student is enrolled in the District, or if a homeless student's school of origin is in the District, but they are enrolled in a different school unit, the school systems will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will share the responsibilities and costs equally.

VII. Records:

Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs regarding each homeless student, will be maintained so that records may be transferred when a student enters a new school system. Access to records will be available to parents/guardians and students in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

VIII. Homeless Student Liaison:

- A. The Superintendent will designate the Director of Special Services to act as Homeless Student Liaison. The Superintendent will inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of RSU #63's Homeless Student Liaison.
- B. The Homeless Student Liaison will be responsible for ensuring that:
 - 1. Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.

2. Homeless children and youths enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools within the District.
3. Homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible, Pre-Kindergarten programs administered by the District, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.
4. The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths 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 children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services, such as schools and CHEFS (Clifton, Holden, Eddington Food Support).
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law.
7. The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school the student will be attending.
8. Unaccompanied youths are assisted in placement or enrollment decisions and provided notice of right to appeal.
9. Children or youths who need to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, receive assistance.