

Policies

Westerly Public Schools

No. 2516

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Policy

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The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures that all children and youth who are homeless, or in transition, receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools.

Westerly Public Schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment.

Information regarding this policy, including the educational rights of children and youth identified as homeless will be in school handbooks, posted on the district website, and posted in every school in the district, as well as other places where children, youth, and families in transition receive services, including family and youth shelters, motels, campgrounds, welfare departments, health departments, and other social service agencies.

Definitions

Children and youth in transition means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education, including preschool, and who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
- Children and youth who have a primary night-time residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.
- Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth will be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

“Unaccompanied youth” means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above. Unaccompanied youths include young people who have been denied housing by their families, run away from home, and/or been abandoned by parents or guardians.

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

Enroll and *enrollment* means attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

Immediate means without delay.

Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

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

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Local liaison or district liaison is the staff person designated by our district and each district in state as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the local homeless education liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The liaison will participate in professional development provided by the RI Department of Education.

Identification

Children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school will be identified.

Data will be collected on the number of children and youth in transition in the district; where they are living; their academic achievement (including state and local assessments); and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education, or school transfers.

School Selection/Stability

School Choice: Your child has the right to stay in their current school (called the “school of origin”) or to enroll in the local school where you are currently living—even if your housing situation is temporary.

Best Interest Decisions: The school district will consider what is best for your child when deciding which school they should attend. This includes looking at how changing schools might affect your child’s education, health, and safety. Your input as a parent or guardian will be given strong consideration.

If the District Disagrees: If the district decides it is not in your child’s best interest to attend the school you choose, you will receive a written explanation. This explanation will be provided in a way that’s clear and easy to understand and will include information about how to appeal the decision.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent or youth’s wishes. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing during the summer.

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin and services under federal and other programs, will not be considered in determining feasibility.

Enrollment

Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency
- Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student’s previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student’s age and information gathered from the student, parent, and previous schools or teachers.)
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, the school must refer students to the local liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records.)

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- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Remove barriers - to the identification of homeless children and youths, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youths, due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.
- Lack of clothing that conforms to dress code
- Any factor related to the student's living situation

Unaccompanied youth must be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or local liaison.

Transportation

Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths will be informed of the right to transportation before they select a school for attendance. At the request of a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the student has a right to attend that school, including during pending disputes.

It is this district's policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a homeless student missing school. If such a dispute arises, the district will arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the State Coordinator for Homeless Education.

Comparable Services

Children and youth in transition shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including:

- Transportation
- Title I, Part A services - Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless of what school they attend
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners
- Programs in career and technical education
- Gifted and talented programs
- Before- and after-school programs
- Pre School - LEA will ensure that children in transition receive priority enrollment in preschool programs operated by the district, including exempting children in transition from waiting lists. Children in transition with disabilities will be referred for preschool services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The local liaison will collaborate with Head Start and other preschool programs.
- Free meals - On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the LEA Food Service office for immediate processing.

When applying any district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused.

Disputes

If a dispute arises regarding any provision of this policy, the child or youth in transition must be immediately enrolled in the school requested by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth—including full participation in all classes and activities—while the dispute is being resolved.

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During this time, the student will continue to receive all applicable services, including transportation, free meals, access to Title I, Part A services, and any other supports provided to students in transition.

The school where the dispute occurs must:

- Provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision,
- Include in that explanation information about the right to appeal, and
- Refer the case immediately to the district's McKinney-Vento liaison.

The **local liaison** will:

- Ensure the student remains enrolled in the school of choice,
- Ensure the student receives all entitled services,
- **Support the family or youth through the appeal process,** and
- **Work to resolve the dispute as quickly as possible.**

The parent, guardian, unaccompanied youth, or school district may **submit a written appeal** of the decision.

The local liaison will maintain records of all disputes and outcomes to identify patterns of delay or denial of enrollment, and to support continuous improvement of district procedures.

Training

The local liaison will facilitate yearly training for necessary district employees.

Coordination

Local educational agency liaisons for homeless children and youths shall, as a part of their duties, coordinate and collaborate with State Coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths. Such coordination shall include collecting and providing to the State Coordinator the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to meet the requirements.

REFERENCES:

- **42 USC CHAPTER 119, SUBCHAPTER VI, Part B: Education for Homeless Children and Youths**

From Title 42—THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

CHAPTER 119—HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

SUBCHAPTER VI—EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- <https://ride.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur806/files/2022-11/Regulations-for-the-Education-for-Homeless-Children-and-Youth.pdf>

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