Students Experiencing Homelessness - Enrollment Rights and Services

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate education (including public preschool education) provided to other students. Special attention will be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, the district will take reasonable steps to ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school on the basis of their homeless status.

Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, 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 those students who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals;
- Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations, or similar settings; or
- Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The superintendent will designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's McKinney-Vento liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison may simultaneously serve as a coordinator for other federal programs, provided that they are able to carry out the duties listed in the procedure that accompanies this policy.

The principal of each elementary, middle, and high school building will establish a point of contact for such youth. The point of contact is responsible for identifying homeless and unaccompanied youth and connecting them with the district's homeless student liaison. The district's homeless student liaison is responsible for training the building points of contact.

Best interest determination
In making a determination as to which school is in the homeless student's best interest to attend, the district will presume that it is in the student's best interest to remain enrolled in their school of origin unless such enrollment is against the wishes of a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

Attendance options will be made available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district, including attendance rights acquired by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, and intra and inter-district choice options.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian will be informed of the district's decision and the reasons therefore, (or informed if the student does not qualify for McKinney-Vento, if applicable) and their appeal rights in writing and in a language they can understand. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school will immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. However, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including academic records, medical records, proof of residency, mailing address or other documentation. Additionally, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to missed application deadlines, fees,

fines, or absences at a previous school.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student will 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 district liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school will be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, and in compliance with the state's Address Confidentiality Program when necessary. However, the district cannot demand emergency contact information in a form or manner that creates a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

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 a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

The district's liaison for homeless students and their families will coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The notice must be disseminated in a manner and form that parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth receiving such services can understand, including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in their native language. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students and will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined by the state-level (OSPI) coordinator for homeless children and youth programs.

The superintendent will:

- Strongly encourage district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers to annually review the video posted on the OSPI website on identification of student homelessness;
- Strongly encourage every district-designated homeless student liaison to attend trainings provided by the state on identification and serving homeless youth. Ensure that the district includes in materials provided to all students at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment, information about services and support for homeless students (i.e., the brochure posted on the OSPI website).
- Use a variety of communications each year to notify students and families about services and support available to them if they experience homelessness (e.g., distributing and collecting a universal annual housing intake survey, providing parent brochures directly to students and families, announcing the information at school-wide assemblies, posting information on the district's website).

Facilitating on-time grade level progression

The district will: 1) waive specific courses required for graduation for students experiencing homelessness if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district; or 2) provide reasonable justification for denial of the waiver. In the event the district denies a waiver and the student would have qualified to graduate from their sending school district, the district will provide an alternative process of obtaining required coursework so that the student may graduate on time.

The district will consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and will provide students experiencing homelessness with opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.

For students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, the district will grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of the withdrawal or transfer. When the district receives a transfer student in these circumstances, it will accept the student's partial credits, apply them to the student's academic progress, graduation, or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the district.

In the event a student is transferring at the beginning of or during their junior or senior year of high school and is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, the district will work with the sending district to ensure the awarding of a diploma from the sending district if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.

In the event a student enrolled in three or more school districts as a high school student, has met state requirements, has transferred to the district, but is ineligible to graduate from the district after all alternatives have been considered, the district will waive its local requirements and ensure that the student receives a diploma.

(Editor's Note: The following bracketed information is not required by law. However, RCW 7.70.065 (2)(b) allows certain school staff to provide informed consent for the provision of nonemergency primary care services to underage homeless children as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, when such children are not under the supervision, control, custody, and/or care of a parent, custodian, legal guardian, or the department of social and health services and when the child is not authorized to provide his or her own consent through another legal mechanism. The optional language below is provided for school boards that would like to include the "informed consent" language based on potential health and welfare benefits for the implicated students.)

[Informed consent for healthcare
Informed consent for healthcare on behalf of a student experiencing homelessness may be obtained from a school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison when:

a. Consent is necessary for non-emergency, outpatient, primary care services, including physical examinations, vision examinations and eyeglasses, dental examinations, hearing examinations and hearing aids, immunizations, treatments for illnesses and conditions, and routine follow-up care customarily provided by a health care provider in an outpatient setting, excluding elective surgeries;

b. The student meets the definition of a "homeless child or youth" under the federal McKinney-Vento homeless education assistance improvements act of 2001; and

c. The student is not under the supervision or control of a parent, custodian, or legal guardian, and is not in the care and custody of the department of social and health services.

Upon the request by a health care facility or a health care provider, a district employee authorized to consent to care must provide to the person rendering care a signed and dated declaration stating under penalty of perjury that the employee is a school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison and that the minor patient meet the requirements of RCW 7.70.065 (2) (b) listed above in this policy.

The district and district employee authorized to consent to care under this policy are not subject to administrative sanctions or civil damages resulting from the consent or non-consent for care or payment for care. Any declaration required by a health care facility or a health care provider described in the above paragraph must include written notice that the district employee is exempt from administrative sanctions and civil liability resulting from the consent or non-consent for care or payment for care.]

Cross References:	3116 - Students in Out-of-Home Care 3120 - Enrollment 3231 - Student Records 3413 - Student Immunization And Life Threatening Health Conditions 4218 - Language Access Plan
Legal References:	RCW 28A.320.142 Unaccompanied youth – Building point of contact – Duty of District 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences RCW 28A.320.145 Support for homeless students.

20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]
Chapter 28A.320 RCW Provisions applicable to all districts (new section created by 3SHB 1682, 2016 legislative session)

Management Resources:

2018 - May Policy Issue
2017 - October Policy Issue
2017 - July Policy Issue
Posters and Other Materials for Community Outreach - OSPI
2016 - November Issue
2016 - July Issue
2014 - December Issue
2004 - October Issue
2002 - October Issue
2019 - July Policy Issue

Adoption Date: **05.21**
Classification: **Essential**
Revised Dates: **10.02; 10.04; 12.11; 12.14; 07.16; 11.16; 07.17; 10.17; 05.18; 07.19**

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