

RANCHO SANTA FE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board Policy No. 6034: EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS

STUDENTS

- A. The Governing Board recognizes its obligation to ensure that homeless children have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education, as is provided to other children within the District. The District shall provide homeless school age children with access to education and other services to assist these children to meet the same challenging State academic performance standards to which all District students are held. The purpose of this policy is to comply with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC 11431, et seq.).
- B. Definitions:
1. The terms “enroll” and “enrollment” include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
 2. The term “homeless children and youths” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:
 - a. 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 alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - b. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - c. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - d. migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in (a) through (c), above.
 3. “School of origin” means the school that the homeless student attended when permanently housed or the school in which he/she was last enrolled, including a preschool. If the school the homeless student attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which he/she was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that he/she attended within the preceding 15 months and with which he/she is connected, the District Liaison shall determine, in consultation with and with the agreement of the homeless student and the person holding the right to

make educational decisions for the student, and in the best interests of the homeless student, which school shall be deemed the school of origin.

4. The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

C. District Liaison: The District designates the Middle School Principal as District Liaison for homeless students. The District shall post on its website the name and contact information for the District Liaison, and specific information on homelessness, including, but not limited to, information regarding rights and resources available to persons experiencing homelessness. The District Liaison shall:

1. Ensure homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies and that homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
2. Ensure homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, District schools;
3. Ensure homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including services through Head Start programs and early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.);
4. Inform parents or guardians of homeless children and youths regarding educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
5. Disseminate notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths;
6. Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with the law and as addressed below;
7. Fully inform the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, regarding all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and assist parent/guardian in accessing transportation to the school of choice;
8. Ensure school personnel providing services to homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support;

9. Ensure unaccompanied youths are enrolled in school with the opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic standards established for other students, and are informed of their status as independent students under section 1087vv of title 20 and that the youths may obtain assistance from the district liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid; and
10. 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 data to the state coordinator as required by law.
11. Offer training to certificated and classified employees providing services to pupils experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited to, teachers, support staff, and other school staff who work with pupils, at least annually relating to both of the following:
 - a. The requirements and programs established by this policy; and
 - b. Recognition of signs that pupils are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

This training may, in the discretion of the District liaison, be provided to all District employees.

12. Inform employees providing services to pupils experiencing homelessness of the availability of training and the services the liaison provides to aid in the identification and provision of services to pupils who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

D. Privacy: Information regarding a homeless child's or youth's living situation shall be treated as a student education record and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

E. Enrollment and Placement of Homeless Children:

1. The District shall make enrollment and placement decisions based on the best interest of the homeless student.
2. Homeless students shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way. However, the Superintendent or designee may separate homeless students on school grounds as necessary for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special, and supplementary services to meet the unique needs of homeless students.
3. The Superintendent or designee shall continue to identify and remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths, as well as the enrollment and

retention of homeless children and youths including due to outstanding fees or absences.

F. Enrollment Disputes:

1. If a dispute arises regarding the District's decision related to student eligibility or enrollment:
 - a. the child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals;
 - b. the parent or guardian of the child or youth or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth shall be provided with a written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by the District, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions;
 - c. the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the district liaison designated, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
 - d. in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in the school in which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of such dispute.
2. If the parent/guardian disputes the enrollment decision, the parent/guardian shall submit a brief written statement appealing the decision within five (5) working days of the issuance of the written explanation. The District Liaison will review all materials and information submitted, may meet with the parent/guardian and/or student as needed, and then issue a written decision regarding the dispute within ten working days consistent with the written explanation criteria above. If the dispute is unresolved at the district liaison level, the dispute can be appealed to the Superintendent within five (5) working days of the issuance of the District Liaison decision. If the dispute remains unresolved following the District decision or is appealed, the District Liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the homeless liaison at the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) who shall review these materials and notify the parent/guardian and the District of the decision. If the dispute remains unresolved at that stage, the SDCOE liaison shall forward the materials to the State Homeless Coordinator.

G. Transportation:

1. The District shall provide transportation for a homeless student to and from his/her school of origin when the student is residing within the district and the parent/guardian, or the district liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, requests that such transportation be provided.
2. If the student moves outside of District boundaries, but continues to attend his/her school of origin within this District, the Superintendent or designee shall consult

with the superintendent of the district in which the student is now residing to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.

H. Identification of Homeless Children and Youths and Unaccompanied Youths

1. The District shall ensure that each school within the District identifies all homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled at the school.
2. The District shall annually administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths, as those terms are defined in Title 42 USC Section 11434a(2). The District shall ensure that the housing questionnaire is based on best practices developed by the California Department of Education pursuant to Education Code Section 48852.5(f)(1)(A). The housing questionnaire shall include an explanation of the rights and protections a pupil has as a homeless child or youth or as an unaccompanied youth. The housing questionnaire shall be available in paper form.
3. The District shall provide the housing questionnaire to all parents or guardians of pupils and to all unaccompanied youths of the District.
4. If the primary language of a pupil's parent or guardian or an unaccompanied youth is not English, the housing questionnaire shall be made available in the primary language of the unaccompanied youth or pupil's parent or guardian pursuant to Education Code Section 48985, or an appropriate translation of the housing questionnaire shall be provided upon request of a pupil's parent or guardian or an unaccompanied youth.
5. The District shall annually report to the California Department of Education the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled in the District.

I. The Governing Board shall review this policy at least once every three years.

Legal Reference:

Education Code §§ 48850-48859

42 USC §§ 11431-11435 [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act] 42 USC § 11302

Date Policy Adopted By The Board: September 7, 2017

Date Policy Revised By The Board: October 14, 2022. August 3,

3023 Date Policy Reviewed By The Board: August 3, 2023