

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 8.50
HOMELESS STUDENTS**

(1) IDENTIFICATION

(a) Information regarding the Homeless Education Program (HEP), including services available to homeless students and how to obtain these services, will be posted in every school in the district and Central Services. Information will also be posted at social service agencies and other public places.

(b) In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the HEP staff at Central Services will identify homeless children and youth in the district, both in and out of school. Those who are not currently enrolled in school will be provided with enrollment services.

(c) Each principal/school leader shall identify a full-time staff member to serve as the Homeless Contact. The name of the Homeless Contact shall be given to the HEP staff at Central Services annually. The Homeless Contacts will coordinate their schools' compliance with this policy and will receive training from the HEP staff at Central Services annually.

(d) The HEP staff at Central Services and the Homeless Contact will determine if the child or youth qualifies as homeless. All students identified as homeless must have a Homeless Education Program Enrollment Form on file in the HEP office at Central Services. HEP staff at Central Services will be responsible for entering the information into the student database.

(e) Homeless status continues until the student is in stable housing. If the student continues to be homeless the following school year, he/she must reapply for the Homeless Education Program.

(f) The HEP staff will ensure that the following groups have professional development opportunities on a regular basis to improve identification and services:

1. Homeless Contacts
2. Administrators
3. Student Services staff
4. School Social Workers
5. School Staff
6. School Counselors
7. School Psychologists
8. School Nurses
9. School Secretaries
10. Special Education Supervisors

(g) Professional development topics may include:

1. students' rights under the McKinney-Vento Act,
2. indicators of homelessness,
3. sensitivity in identifying families and youth as homeless,
4. how to enroll students in the Homeless Education Program,
5. services to homeless families and unaccompanied youth,
6. compliance with MPS policies and procedures regarding homeless students.

(2) SCHOOL OF ORIGIN, SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY, SELECTION AND PLACEMENT

(a) A homeless child or youth has the right to remain at his or her school of origin (the public school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the public school in which the child or youth was last enrolled) or to attend any public school that other students who live in the attendance area are eligible to attend. If the student is eligible to attend more than one school, parents/caregivers will have the option of choosing the school. A student is eligible to attend a school only if the student meets the requirements of the school and there is a seat available.

(b) In the case of unaccompanied youth, the local educational agency liaison or designee will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the requests of such unaccompanied youth. The school placement shall be made regardless of whether the homeless child or youth lives with the parents or guardian or is temporarily living elsewhere.

(c) Homeless children and youth shall remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, unless it is against the parent/caregiver or youth's wishes. Feasibility shall be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent/caregiver or youth's wishes. Required services, including transportation to and from the school of origin and services under federal and other programs, shall not be considered in determining feasibility. Potential feasibility considerations include:

1. safety of the student;
2. continuity of instruction;
3. likely area of family or youth's future housing;
4. time remaining in the academic year;
5. anticipated length of stay in temporary living situation;
6. school placement of siblings;
7. whether the student has special needs that would render the commute harmful;
8. length of commute.

(d) Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth becomes homeless between academic years.

(e) When a student is placed at a school other than the school of origin against the parent's/caregiver's wishes, the parent/caregiver will be notified in writing of the reason for the placement. This written explanation must also include information regarding the process for disputing this decision. A copy of the letter must be forwarded to the HEP staff at Central Services for documentation.

(3) ENROLLMENT

(a) Homeless students must be enrolled immediately (within one school day).

(b) Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or district liaison/designee. If the youth is enrolled by an adult other than the parent or guardian, the adult will sign the Caretaker Authorization Form.

(c) The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" are defined to mean receiving a school assignment, attending school, and participating fully in school activities. The school selected for enrollment must immediately (within one school day) enroll any homeless child or youth. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment.

(d) Once permanent housing is found, the family has a choice to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year or to attend the public school for which they are eligible where they have found housing. Out-of-region and cross-district transportation services will not be available once the family is in stable housing.

(4) RESIDENCY

(a) A homeless child or youth is a resident if the child is personally present somewhere within the district with the purpose to remain, but not necessarily to remain permanently. The address listed on the Student Assignment Form becomes proof of temporary residency. The residence can be traditional or non-traditional, such as a hotel, shelter, or other place as listed in the definition of Homeless Children and Youth (see Administrative Policy 8.50)

(b) The child or youth shall be considered a resident when living in the district not solely for the purpose of attending school or for participation in extracurricular activities.

(5) SCHOOL SERVICES

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided school services comparable to services offered to housed students in the school selected. School personnel must inform parents/caregivers of all educational and related opportunities available to homeless children and provide parents/caregivers with meaningful opportunities to participate in the homeless children's education. Services include, but are not limited to:

- (a) free breakfast and lunch,
- (b) school supplies and books,
- (c) preschool programs,
- (d) transportation services (see details below),
- (e) educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as programs for English-language learners, special education services, or programs for gifted and talented students,
- (f) programs for "At-Risk" students,
- (g) vocational and technical education programs,
- (h) Title I services,
- (i) waiver of school fees,
- (j) tutorial programs,
- (k) before- and after-school programs,
- (l) school uniforms (when applicable),
- (m) referrals to community-based agencies and services.

(6) TRANSPORTATION

(a) All Milwaukee public schools have walk zones. Homeless students living within the walk zone will not receive transportation unless the student qualifies for special education and transportation is a related service on the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), or if the lack of transportation is a legitimate barrier for the homeless child to get to school.

(b) Homeless students who live within the school's busing region, but outside the walk zone, will receive the same transportation services as other students living within the school's busing region.

(c) Homeless students temporarily living outside the school's busing region will receive transportation services, such as a school bus, bus pass or bus tickets to the school of origin, for the duration of homelessness.

(d) When the school of origin and current residence are in different school districts, the two districts will agree on a method for transportation and share costs.

(e) If a family chooses to stay in the school of origin after permanent housing has been found, out of region or cross district transportation will no longer be provided by the district. Permanent housing is defined as any signed lease or long-term stable living situation. Self-paying day to day in a motel and transitional housing are not considered permanent housing.

(7) COORDINATION/LEA

(a) The Director of Parent and Student Services will be the Local Educational Agency (LEA) liaison for homeless children and youth. The Homeless Liaison or designee (referred to in this document as HEP staff) will coordinate services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically.

(b) The HEP staff shall coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community,

housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, liaisons in neighboring school districts, and other organizations and agencies. Coordination will include providing community outreach, professional development activities and participating in community collaboration.

(c) The HEP staff will keep data required by the State Department of Public Instruction and the United States Department of Education.

(d) The HEP staff will coordinate with other federal program administrators in delivering services to homeless students.

(8) SCHOOL-SELECTION AND ENROLLMENT DISPUTES

(a) If a homeless child is eligible to attend a school and is denied placement, the parent/caregiver or youth has a right to dispute that placement (refer to section 2, paragraph 1). The homeless child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student has the right to all appropriate educational services, in region transportation, free meals, and Title 1 services and is eligible to receive all McKinney-Vento services while the dispute is pending.

(b) The district shall provide the parent/caregiver or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its placement decision, the right to dispute this decision, and how to file a dispute. The HEP staff at Central Services shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent/caregiver or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The HEP staff at Central Services shall keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are repeatedly delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition.

(c) The parent/caregiver or unaccompanied youth may appeal the liaison's decision by filing a complaint with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, in accordance with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Complaint Resolution and Appeals Process.

History: 6-25-09

Legal Ref.: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C., 11431 et. seq.); Section 118.13, Wisconsin Statutes

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