



Capital School District

Board of Education Policy

Section: Home, School and Community
Title: Education for Students Experiencing Homelessness
Policy #: 400-10
Date Approved: 02/17/21
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ESTABLISHMENT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines to schools for education of homeless students.

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Children who are identified as meeting the Federal definition of "experiencing homelessness" will be provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and other services needed to ensure an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held. To that end, students experiencing homelessness will not be stigmatized or segregated based on their status as "experiencing homelessness." The LEA shall establish safeguards that protect students experiencing homelessness from discrimination based on their homelessness. The LEA shall regularly review and revise its policies, including school discipline policies that impact students experiencing homelessness, including those who may be a member of any of the protected classes.

Definitions

"Children and youth experiencing homelessness" are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and include children and youth who meet any of the following criteria:

- share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- live in emergency or transitional shelters;
- are abandoned in hospitals;
- 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; or
- live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

Additionally, pursuant to Federal law, children or youth who are experiencing homelessness also include migratory children who are living in circumstances described above.

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, an "unaccompanied youth" includes a child or youth experiencing homelessness and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Services to Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

The LEA will provide services to students experiencing homelessness that are comparable to other students in the LEA, including:

- transportation services;
- public preschool programs and other educational programs and services for which the student experiencing homelessness meets eligibility criteria including:
 - Title I programs;
 - programs for children with disabilities;
 - programs for English learners (ELs) (i.e., students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP));
 - programs in career and technical education;
 - programs for gifted and talented students;
 - school nutrition programs; and
 - before-and after-school programs.

The Chief School Officer will appoint an LEA Homeless Education Liaison who will perform the duties as assigned by the Chief School Officer. Additionally, the LEA Homeless Education Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness as well as with community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to children and youths experiencing homelessness.

School Stability

Maintaining a stable school environment is crucial to the success of a student experiencing homelessness. To ensure stability, the LEA must make school placement determinations based on the “best interest” of the child or youth experiencing homelessness based on student-centered factors. The LEA must:

- continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family experiences homelessness between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year even if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
- enroll the student in any public school that students not experiencing homelessness who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth, or the family of the child or youth, is actually living are eligible to attend.

When determining a child or youth’s best interest, the LEA must assume that keeping the student experiencing homelessness in the school of origin is in that student’s best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student’s parent or guardian, or the student if he or she is an unaccompanied youth. The school of origin is the school the student attended or enrolled in when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a public preschool. The school of origin also includes the designated receiving school which includes the next school level elementary from prekindergarten, middle from elementary, high from middle, that a child or youth experiencing homelessness, whose homelessness continues in the next school year, may attend when the next level school is the LEA-designated school for students in the school or origin of the student experiencing homelessness.

When determining the student’s best interest, the LEA must also consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of students experiencing homelessness and give priority to the request of the student’s parent or guardian, or youth (if an

unaccompanied youth). The LEA must also consider the school placement of siblings when making this determination.

If the LEA finds that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth, the LEA must provide the individual with a written explanation and reason for the determination in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. This written explanation will include appeal rights and be provided in a timely manner.

Remove Barriers

The LEA has an obligation to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of students experiencing homelessness. If a school other than the student's school of origin is chosen on the basis of a best interest determination, the student experiencing homelessness must be immediately enrolled, even if the student does not have the documentation typically necessary for enrollment, such as immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certificate, or previous academic records. The student experiencing homelessness must also be enrolled immediately regardless of whether the student missed application or enrollment deadlines during the period of homelessness, fails to meet uniform or dress code requirements, or has outstanding fines or fees.

The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the student experiencing homelessness to obtain relevant academic or other records and provide credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at the previous school of enrollment. If the student needs immunization or other health records, the enrolling school must immediately refer the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the LEA Homeless Education Liaison, who will help obtain the immunizations, screenings or other required health records. Records usually maintained by the school must be kept so that they are available in a timely fashion if the child enters a new school or LEA. These records include immunization or other required health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs. Procedures for inter-State records transfer between schools should be taken into account in order to facilitate immediate enrollment.

In addition, it shall be the LEA's responsibility to make sure that, once identified for services, the student experiencing homelessness is attending classes and not facing barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs (if available). The LEA will coordinate with community service providers and agencies, including housing authorities, to provide support to students experiencing homelessness and their families.

Unaccompanied high school youth experiencing homelessness will receive counseling to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education.

Transportation

The LEA shall promptly provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation services that are comparable to those available to students not experiencing homelessness. At the request of the parent or guardian, or the LEA Homeless Education Liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the LEA shall provide, or arrange for, transportation to and from the student's school of origin.

When the student obtains permanent housing, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin until the end of the school year.

Dispute Resolution

When considering placement in a school other than the child's or youth's school of origin, the LEA will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student's best interest.

When the LEA determines that a placement other than the school of origin is in the best interest, the LEA will provide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness with a written explanation in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth; and information on the right to appeal the placement determination.

During a school selection dispute, the child or youth will either remain enrolled in the student's school of origin or shall be immediately enrolled in the eligible school in which enrollment is sought, pending the final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.

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 decision related to school selection or enrollment made by the school or the LEA, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions.

Children Experiencing Homelessness in Preschool

Preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including Federally-funded preschool programs, including Head Start programs, administered by the LEA. Additionally, the child experiencing homelessness must remain in the public preschool of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. When making such a decision on the student's best interest, the LEA takes into account the same factors as it does for any student, regardless of age. It also considers pre-school age-specific factors, such as 1) the child's attachment to preschool teachers and staff; 2) the impact of school climate on the child, including school safety; the quality and availability of services to meet the child's needs, including health, developmental, and social-emotional needs; and 3) travel time to and from school.

The LEA must also provide transportation services to the school of origin for a child experiencing homelessness attending a Federally-funded preschool. It is the LEA's responsibility to provide the child with transportation to the school of origin even if the preschooler experiencing homelessness who is enrolled in a public preschool in the LEA moves to another LEA that does not provide widely available or universal preschool.

Public Notice

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the student experiencing homelessness or the unaccompanied youth of the applicable rights described above, the LEA shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness in each school. In addition, the LEA shall post public notice of the McKinney-Vento rights in places that populations experiencing

homelessness frequent, such as shelters, soup kitchens, and libraries in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians and unaccompanied youths.

Records

The local LEA Homeless Education Liaison will assist the students experiencing homelessness and their parent(s) or guardian(s) or unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school.

All records for students experiencing homelessness shall be maintained, subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and in such a manner so that they are available in a timely fashion and can be transferred promptly to the appropriate parties, as required. Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, information regarding the living situation of a student experiencing homelessness is not considered directory information and must be provided the same protections as other non-directory personally identifiable information (PII) contained in student education records under FERPA. The LEA shall incorporate practices to protect student privacy as described in accordance with the provisions of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).

No Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of children experiencing homelessness.