No. 7320
SECTION: PROGRAMS
TITLE: HOMELESS STUDENTS

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OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Board recognizes its obligation to ensure that homeless students have access to the same educational programs and services provided to other district students. The Board shall make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children within the district, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education, in compliance with federal and state law and regulations.

The Board authorizes the Superintendent or designee to waive the district policies, procedures and administrative regulations that create barriers for enrollment, attendance, transportation and success in school of homeless students, based on the recommendation of the Superintendent and in accordance with law.

Homeless students are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular and nighttime residence, which include the following conditions:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship or other similar reason.
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
3. Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters.
4. Abandoned in hospitals.
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as sleeping accommodations for human beings.
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings.
7. Living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples.
8. Unaccompanied youth such as those lving as run-away children. Unaccompanied Youth meaning those children or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth who have run away from home; been abandoned or forced out of home by a parent, guardian or other caretaker; or separated from a parent or guardian for any other reason.

School of Origin is defined as the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

The Board designates the Superintendent or his/her designee to serve as the district’s liaison for homeless students and families.

The district’s liaison shall coordinate with:

1. Local service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youth and families.

2. Other school district on issues of records, transfer and transportation.
3. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

The district's liaison shall provide public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens.

Students shall not be discriminated against, segregated nor stigmatized based on their status as homeless.

The district's liaison shall provide reliable, valid and comprehensive data to the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

Enrollment/Placement

Best Interest Determination

To the extent feasible, and in accordance with the student's best interest, a homeless student shall continue to be enrolled in his/her school of origin while s/he obtains permanent housing. Parents/guardians of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school district in the attendance area where the student is actually living or in another school district. If a student is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, the district liaison will consider the views of the student in determining where s/he will be enrolled.

The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment pursuant to district policies. However, the district may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information. The district liaison shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academics or other records.

If the district is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's placement.

Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises over school district selection or enrollment, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school district in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parents/guardians shall be provided with a written explanation of the district's decision, their right to appeal and the procedures to use for the appeal.

Education Records

Information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Comparable Services

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other district students, including, but not limited to, transportation services; school nutrition programs; vocational programs and technical education; preschool programs; programs for students with limited English proficiency; and educational services for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students.

Transportation

The district shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they attend within the district.

If the school of origin is outside district boundaries or homeless students live in another district but will attend their school of origin in this district, the school district shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and cost of the transportation.

Training

The district's liaison shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance activities offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.

The district's liaison shall arrange professional development programs for school staff, including office staff. School personnel providing services to homeless children and youths, including district enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support.