

Policy 5151

(X) Required

Local

Notice

HOMELESS CHILDREN

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility under federal (McKinney-Vento) and state laws and regulations to identify homeless children within the district, encourage their enrollment and eliminate existing barriers to their identification, enrollment, attendance, or success in school which may exist in district practices. The Board will provide homeless children attending the district's schools with access to the same free and appropriate public education and other school programs and activities, including publicly funded preschool education, as other children.

A homeless child is a child who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or who has a primary nighttime location in a public or private shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, or a place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. This definition also includes a child who shares the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; lives in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; lives in a car, park, public space or abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station or similar setting; has been abandoned in a hospital; or is a migratory child who qualifies as homeless. An unaccompanied youth is a homeless child not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

To assist in determine eligibility for services under the McKinney-Vento Act, the district shall use a housing questionnaire for all enrolling students, and those reporting a change of address, which asks for a description of the student's current living arrangements.

A homeless child or youth has the right to attend his/her school of origin, or any school that permanently housed students who live in the attendance area in which the homeless student is actually living are eligible to attend. For homeless students, a school of origin can be:

1. the public school where he/she attended when permanently housed (i.e., before becoming homeless); or
2. the public school where he/she was last enrolled, or
3. the public school he/she was entitled or eligible to enroll in when the child became homeless, if that child became homeless after such child was eligible to apply, register, or enroll in a public preschool or kindergarten, or he/she is living with a school-age sibling who attends school in the district; or

4. the designated receiving school at the next grade level for any feeder school, where the child has completed the final grade in the feeder school.

Such schools include publicly-funded preschools administered by the district or the State Education Department (SED).

The homeless child is entitled to attend the designated school on a tuition-free basis for the duration of his or her homelessness. If the child becomes permanently housed, the child is entitled to continue attendance in the same school building until the end of the school year and for one additional year if that year constitutes the child's terminal year in such building. If a homeless child completes the final grade level in his/her school of origin, the child may also attend the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

1. Admission: Upon designation, the district shall immediately admit the homeless child to school, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical or immunization records (however, the district may temporarily exclude a child from attendance if there are actual symptoms of a communicable disease that poses a significant risk of transmission to others), proof of age or residency or other documentation and even if there is a dispute with the child's parents regarding school selection or enrollment. During a dispute, the student may continue attending the school until final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. Homeless children will have the same opportunity as other children to enroll in and succeed in the district's schools. They will not be placed in separate schools or programs based on their status as homeless. The district shall eliminate barriers to identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees, fines or absences. Students who become homeless while attending the district shall be eligible for continued enrollment, even if they are temporarily residing outside the district's boundaries.
2. Transportation: . Unless the homeless child is receiving transportation provided by the Department of Social Services, the district shall provide transportation services to the child in accordance with applicable law. Where the district is designated by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, and the student attends the school of origin as defined in law (including a publicly funded preschool administered by the district or the State Education Department), the district shall provide transportation, even if transportation is not generally provided to permanently housed students and the student is residing outside the district's boundaries. A designated school district that must provide transportation to a homeless child is not required to provide transportation in excess of 50 miles one way, unless the Commissioner of Education determines that it is in the best interest of the child. Transportation shall be provided for the duration of homelessness, through the remainder of the school year in which the student becomes permanently housed, and one additional year if that is the student's final year in the school. Transportation to extra-

curricular activities and summer school shall also be provided for homeless students if lack of transportation poses a barrier to their participation.

3. School Records: For homeless students attending school out of the district, the district shall, within five days of receipt of a request for records, forward a complete copy of the homeless child's records including proof of age, academic records, evaluation, immunization records and guardianship paper, if applicable. For homeless students attending school in the district, the district shall request the student's records (academic, medical, etc.) from the school the student last attended.
4. Coordination: The district shall coordinate with local social services agencies and other entities providing services to homeless children and their families for the provision of services to homeless children, and shall coordinate with other school districts on issues of prompt identification, transportation, transfer of records, and other inter-district activities. This shall include ensuring the provision of appropriate services to homeless students with disabilities who are eligible for services under either Section 504 or IDEA.

A portion of the district's Title I, Part A funds shall be set aside for homeless children and youth to provide educationally related support services and services not ordinarily provided to other students.

Information about a homeless child's living situation shall be treated as a student education record, and shall not be considered directory information under FERPA. See policy 5500, Student Records, for more information.

The Superintendent shall also designate a McKinney-Vento liaison for homeless children and ensure that this person is aware of, and able to carry out, his or her responsibilities under the law. The Superintendent shall ensure that the liaison receives appropriate professional development on identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students, including the definitions of terms related to homelessness. The liaison's responsibilities shall include, but not be limited to, ensuring that:

1. parents or guardians of homeless children are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
2. parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services available to them, and are assisted in accessing them;
3. enrollment disputes involving homeless children are promptly mediated and resolved;
4. school personnel, through outreach and in coordination with shelters and social service agencies and other appropriate entities, identify homeless children, including homeless preschoolers;
5. homeless children receive educational services, including but not limited to Head Start and preschool services to which they are eligible, as well as referrals to health care and other appropriate services for homeless children and their families;

6. public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated in locations frequented by homeless unaccompanied youth and parents/guardians of homeless children, in a manner and form understandable to them;
7. staff who provide services to homeless students receive required professional development and support on identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students;
8. homeless unaccompanied youth are informed of their rights, are enrolled in school, and have opportunities to meet the same state standards set for all students, including receiving credit for full or partial coursework earned in a prior school pursuant to Commissioner's regulations.

Dispute Resolution Process

If, after the Superintendent reviews the designation form, he/she finds that the student is either not homeless, not entitled to attend the district's school, or not entitled to transportation (if requested) the Superintendent or designee will do the following:

1. Contact the district's McKinney-Vento liaison to assist in dispute resolution process.
2. Contact the student and parent (if available) and inform them of their opportunity to provide more information prior to the district making a final determination.

If, after consideration of any additional information and input from the McKinney-Vento liaison, the Superintendent makes a final determination that a student is not homeless, or not entitled to enrollment or transportation, he/she must provide the student's parent or guardian, or the student, if the student is an unaccompanied youth, with written notice that the student is not entitled to their request. This written notice must also:

1. state the rationale/basis for the district's determination;
2. state the date as of which the student will be excluded from the district's schools (or transportation), which shall be at least 30 days from receipt of the written notice;
3. advise that the district's final determination may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner);
4. provide the name and contact information for the district's McKinney-Vento liaison;
5. inform the student's parent or guardian or the student, if the student is an unaccompanied youth, that the district's McKinney-Vento liaison is required to assist him/her in filing such an appeal; and
6. include, as an attachment, the form needed to file an appeal to the Commissioner.

The Superintendent must ensure that the district's final decision is delivered to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth within ten (10) business days. The student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if requested) until the district provides written notice of its final determination and for a minimum of 30 days after receipt of the determination to give

the student's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth the opportunity to appeal to the Commissioner.

If the parent/guardian or student commences an appeal to the Commissioner within 30 days of the final determination, the homeless child or youth will be permitted to continue to attend the school s/he is enrolled in at the time of the appeal and/or receive transportation to that school until the Commissioner renders a decision.

In accordance with Commissioner's regulations, the district shall collect and transmit to the Commissioner information necessary to assess the educational needs of homeless children within the State.

Cross-ref: 5150, School Admissions
5420, Student Health Services
5500, Student Records

Ref: 20 USC § 6313(c)
42 USC §§11431 et seq.
McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, 81 Fed. Reg. 14432-14436 (3/17/16)
U.S. Department of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, Non-Regulatory Guidance (7/27/16), <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>
Education Law §§207; 305; 3202; 3205; 3209
Executive Law §§532-b; 532-e
Social Services Law §§17; 62; 397
8 NYCRR §§100.2(x); 175.6

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