

Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs. Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking as fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- B. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative Adequate accommodations;
- C. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. Are abandoned in hospitals;
- E. Awaiting foster care placement;
- F. Living in public or private places not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular Sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- G. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, Transportation stations or similar settings;
- H. Are migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's liaison for homeless students and their families.

According to the child's or youth's best interest, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in which attendance area the student is actually living, or other schools. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. However, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including academic records, medical records, proof of residency, mailing address or other documentation. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. However, emergency contact information cannot be demanded in a form or manner that constructs a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, of a homeless student is living in another district, but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

The district's liaison for homeless students their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchen. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

Cross References: BP 3120 Enrollment
BP 3231 Student Records
BP 3413 Student Immunization and Life-Threatening Conditions

Legal References: RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of Children with legal residences
Title I, Part C No Child Left Behind Act, 2002
42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Adoption Date: June 20, 2005

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

School District Placement of Children and Youths in Homeless Situations

Note: For all three levels of the dispute resolution process, the child/youth must attend the school in which they sought enrollment while the dispute process is being carried out. **The first level of appeal is to the district homeless liaison, if unresolved, the case is appealed to the local school district superintendent and if the dispute continues to be unresolved, the final appeal is to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the local school board.**

Level I

If a school district seeks to place a homeless child or youth in a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent, the child's/youth's parent shall be informed of their right to appeal the decision made by the school district and provided:

1. Written notice of the decision made by the local school district, explaining why the district sought to place the child/youth in a school other than the school of origin, or the school requested by the parent;
2. Written information of the parent's right to appeal;
3. Written description of the dispute resolution process; and
4. Written summary of the McKinney-Vento law.

If a parent wishes to appeal a school district's decision related to a student's placement:

1. The parent must file a request for dispute resolution with the district's homeless liaison. In the event that the district's homeless liaison is unavailable, a school district designee may initiate the dispute resolution process.
2. The homeless liaison must log the complaint, including the date and time, with a written description of the situation and the reason for the dispute, and a copy of the complaint must be forwarded to the liaison's immediate supervisor and the district superintendent.
3. Within three (3) working days of receipt of the complaint, the liaison must make a decision on the complaint and inform the parent in writing of the result.
4. If the parent wishes to appeal the decision, the district homeless liaison shall provide the parent with an appeals package containing:
 - a. the parent's grievance,
 - b. the decision rendered at Level I, and
 - c. any additional information from the parent and/or homeless liaison.

Level II

If the dispute remains unresolved after a Level I appeal:

1. The parent may appeal the decision to the local school district superintendent, or the superintendent's designee using the appeals package provided at Level I.
2. The superintendent, or superintendent's designee, will arrange for a personal conference to be held with the parent within three (3) working days of the parent's receipt of the Level I appeals package.
3. The local superintendent or superintendent's designee, will provide a decision in writing to the parent with supporting evidence and reasons, within three (3) working days of the superintendent's or superintendent designee's personal conference with the parent.
4. A copy of the appeals package, along with the written decision, is to be shared with the district's homeless liaison.
5. If the dispute remains unresolved, the process then moves to Level III.

Level III

If the dispute remains unresolved:

1. The district superintendent shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the OSPI's homeless education coordinator, or designee, for review, within three (3) working days of notifying the parent of the decision rendered at Level II.
2. The OSPI homeless education coordinator or designee, shall make a recommended decision within three (3) working days of receipt of the complaint.
3. The final recommendation will be forwarded to the local school district's homeless liaison for distribution to the parent, the local superintendent, and the local school board.
4. At the next regularly scheduled or special meeting of the school board, the board shall accept or reject the recommendation. The parent and/or the district's homeless liaison acting on behalf of the parent, may exercise the option of presenting information relative to the complaint at the meeting, as appropriate to the structure and agenda of the meeting.
5. The local school board's determination shall be the final resolution for placement of a homeless child or youth in the district.