

Book
Policy Manual
Section
200 Pupils
Title
Homeless Students
Code
251
Status
Active
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Authority

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. [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)

The Board may waive policies, procedures and administrative regulations that create barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability and success in school of homeless students, based on the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Definitions

Homeless children and youths are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, which include the following conditions: [\[4\]](#)

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
2. Living in motels, hotels, camping 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 regular 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. Living as run-away children.
9. Abandoned or forced out of homes by parents/guardians or caretakers.
10. Living as school age unwed mothers in houses for unwed mothers if they have no other living accommodations.

School of origin is defined as the school the student or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student or youth was last enrolled, including preschool.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Board designates the Superintendent or their designee to serve as the district's liaison for homeless students and families.

The district's liaison shall ensure outreach and coordination with: [\[5\]](#)

1. Local service agencies and other entities that provide services to homeless children and youth and families.
2. Other school districts on issues of prompt identification, records transfer and transportation and other inter-district activities.
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, public libraries and soup kitchens. [\[5\]](#)

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.

Guidelines

Students shall not be discriminated against, segregated nor stigmatized based on their status as homeless. [\[5\]](#)

Enrollment/Placement

Best Interest Determination-

In determining the best interest of a child or youth, the district shall:

1. Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.
2. Consider student-centered factors related to impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety, giving priority to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.
3. If, after such consideration, the district determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the district shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth and shall include information regarding the right to appeal.

Placement:

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 remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which s/he obtains permanent housing.

Parents/Guardians of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the student is actually living.

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.[\[5\]](#)

The district shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of any district decision related to school selection or placement, including the right to appeal.

Enrollment:

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.

The district may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information. The district liaison may contact the previous school for oral confirmation of immunizations, and the school shall request records from the previous district, pursuant to Board policy.[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)[\[11\]](#)

Assignment:

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 selection or enrollment, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school 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.

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; career 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. [\[1\]\[5\]](#)

Transportation

The district shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend within the school district. [\[1\]\[5\]](#)

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 of origin and the educating entity shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of transportation.

Training

The district's liaison shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance activities. 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 school enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support: improve the identification of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths; understand the rights of such children, including requirements for immediate enrollment and

transportation; and heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to, the educational needs of such children.

Legal

1. 24 P.S. 1306

2. 22 PA Code 11.18

3. 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq

4. 42 U.S.C. 11434a

5. 42 U.S.C. 11432

6. Pol. 200

7. Pol. 201

8. Pol. 203

9. Pol. 204

10. Pol. 209

11. Pol. 216

22 PA Code 403.1