

Cottonwood Joint School District No. 242

STUDENTS

3060

Education of Homeless Children

Each child of a homeless individual and each homeless child has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other students and will be given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools and to meet State and local academic achievement standards. They will be included in State and District-wide assessments and accountability systems. The Board of Trustees directs all District schools to admit children who are homeless regardless of residence and irrespective of whether the homeless child is able to produce records normally required for enrollment. The Board may not require an out-of-District attendance agreement and tuition for a homeless child.

Schools in the Cottonwood Joint School District will work to ensure that children and youth who are homeless are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment. The District will also strive to prevent stigma against students who are homeless.

Information regarding this policy, including the educational rights of children and youth identified as homeless, will be distributed to all students upon enrollment and once during the school year, or may be included in any student handbook distributed by the District. It will also be provided to students who seek to withdraw from school, and posted in every school in the District, as well as other places where children, youth, and families who are homeless receive services, including family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in centers, welfare departments, health departments, and other social service agencies.

The Superintendent or designee shall review and revise rules or procedures that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youths. In reviewing and revising such procedures, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, medical records requirements, guardianship issues, unpaid school fees, uniform or dress code requirements, residence, birth certificates, school records, other documentation, and any factor relating to the student's living situation. Students shall be enrolled in school immediately, without delay regarding any required documents. Once such documents are obtained, they shall be maintained so that they are available in a timely fashion when the child enters a new school or school district. The District shall serve students regardless of whether they are in the custody of a parent or guardian.

The Superintendent or designee shall also review and revise rules and practices to ensure that homeless students have equal access to educational services. Homeless students shall have access to services comparable to services offered to other students, including but not limited to:

1. Transportation services;
2. Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, such as Title I;
3. Educational programs for children with disabilities and limited English proficiency;

4. Programs in vocational and technical education, as well as programs for gifted and talented students;
5. Before and after school programs; and
6. The school nutrition program.

The Superintendent or designee shall give special attention to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless children and youths not currently attending school. The Superintendent or designee shall appoint a liaison for homeless children. The liaison shall act to ensure that:

1. Homeless students, in and out of school, are identified;
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the schools of the District;
3. Homeless youth who have separated from school are provided with opportunities and assistance to reenroll;
4. Students and families have the opportunity to receive educational services for which they are eligible;
5. Parents or guardians are informed of educational and other opportunities available to their children;
6. Parents or guardians are given opportunities to participate in their child's education;
7. Parents or guardians are informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the student's school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services;
8. Public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services;
9. Channels of communication are established between the liaison and local Head Start staff if applicable;
10. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with State and federal law as well as District policy;
11. Unaccompanied youth, as defined in the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement. Unaccompanied youth may enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or local liaison;
12. Youth who lack immunization(s) or other medical records are assisted in obtaining these;
13. The names of all homeless students shall be submitted to the local school nutrition office so that those students can receive free breakfast and lunch. This need not be accompanied by an application to receive free or reduced meals;
14. Unaccompanied youth are assisted in selecting and enrolling in a school, and that they are provided with notice of the right to appeal an enrollment decision; and
15. Parents, school personnel, and others are informed of the rights of homeless children and youth.

The homeless liaison will also coordinate with, and seek support from, the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other such organizations and agencies. Coordination will include conducting outreach and training. Both

public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the liaison and the schools in implementing this policy.

A “homeless child” is defined as provided in the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, but may include:

1. Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting placement in foster care;
2. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
3. Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting; and
4. Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation similar to those described above.

An “unaccompanied youth” is defined as provided in the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, but may include a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Children and youth identified as homeless in the District, both in and out of school, shall be identified. Data shall be collected on the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in the District; where they are living; their academic achievement (including state and local assessments); and the reason for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education, or school transfers.

School Selection

Each child and youth identified as homeless has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that houses students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living, as well as take advantage of any District policy relating to open enrollment and under State law.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth who are homeless will remain at their school of origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent’s/guardian’s or youth’s wishes. Feasibility will be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth’s wishes. Students may remain at their school of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same procedure will be followed if a child or youth loses his or her housing during the summer. Services that are required to be provided, including

transportation to and from the school of origin and services under federal and other programs, will not be considered in determining feasibility.

If a student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the District shall provide a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal, whether or not the individual disputes the placement. Such explanation should be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth can understand. This written explanation shall include:

1. Contact information for the homeless student liaison and State coordinator, with a brief description of their roles;
2. A simple, detachable form to initiate the dispute resolution process. One copy of the form should be retained by the school, and another copy should be returned to the parent/guardian or youth for their records when it is submitted;
3. A step-by-step description of how to dispute the school's decision;
4. Notice of the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute;
5. Notice that "immediate enrollment" includes full participation in all school activities;
6. Notice of the right to appeal to the State if the District-level resolution is not satisfactory; and
7. Timelines for resolving District- and State-level appeals

If an unaccompanied youth or parent/guardian chooses to appeal a placement decision, the District will refer him or her to the homeless student liaison, who shall expeditiously facilitate this process.

Transportation

Parents and unaccompanied youth will be informed of their right to transportation before they select a school for attendance. At a parent's request, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth experiencing homelessness. For unaccompanied youth, transportation will be provided to and from the school requested by the liaison for homeless children following consultation with the student. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school including during pending disputes.

The local liaison will request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin only in the context of potential harm to the student.

If a student's school of origin was in a different district than the school the student is to attend, the District shall seek an agreement with the district of origin on the division of transportation costs. If no such decision is reached, the districts shall divide the costs equally as required by the McKinney-Vento Act. It is the District's policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a homeless student missing school. If such a dispute arises, they will arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the liaison for homeless children. In addition to receiving transportation to and from the school of origin upon request, children and youth who are homeless will also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to other students.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over any issue addressed in this policy, the child or youth experiencing homelessness will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the right to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title 1, Part A services while the dispute is pending.

If agreement cannot be reached between the parties regarding the educational placement or enrollment status of the student, then the District shall promptly seek further assistance from the State Coordinator of Homeless Education to review and determine within ten business days how the student's best interests will be served. All interested parties will be expeditiously informed of the State's determination in writing. The decision of the State Department of Education shall constitute final resolution.

Training

The homeless liaison will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities regarding the education of homeless children for all local education association staff. Such training may include procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the local liaison.

The homeless liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison.

Title 1, Part A

Any student who is homeless and attends school within the District is eligible for Title 1, Part A services. The District shall set aside funding to provide homeless students who attend schools that do not participate in Title 1, Part A with services comparable to those provided by participating schools. Funding may also be set aside to provide targeted assistance to homeless students who attend participating schools.

Each year, schools that have been particularly creative and effective in implementing this policy will be recognized publicly for the benefits they provide their students.

Cross Reference: 3210 Uniform Grievance Procedure
4160 Notice to Parents Required by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Legal Reference: 42 U.S.C. § 11301, et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
20 U.S.C. § 6311, et seq. Title 1, Part A, of the Elementary and
Secondary Education Act.
20 U.S.C. § 1400 Individuals with Disabilities Education
Improvement Act of 2006
42 U.S.C. § 1758 Child Nutrition and WIC Act of 2004
42 U.S.C. § 9801-642A Improving Head Start for School Readiness
Act of 2007
I.C. § 33-1404 Districts to Receive Pupils
Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program: Title VII of the
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, As Amended by the No Child
Left Behind Act of 2001: Non-Regulatory Guidance

Policy History:

Adopted on: August 15, 2016

Revised on: