STUDENTS Policy 2260 Regulation 2260

Admission and Withdrawal

Homeless Students

The Board of Education is committed to providing equal access for all eligible homeless students to a free, appropriate education in the same manner as is provided to other District students. In carrying out this commitment, the District will identify and assess the needs of the District's homeless students; provide for the placement of its homeless students in the school of best interest; provide access to the District's programs; and appoint a homeless liaison. The Superintendent will review all District policies to determine whether they act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. Special attention will be given to policies regarding transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and guardianship.

Identification

For purposes of Board policies and regulations *homeless students* include students under age twenty- one (21) who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and include students who:

1. are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in hotels, motels, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;

2. have a primary night time residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

3. are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

4. Are a migratory child or youth who qualifies as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

School Selection

Parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth will be informed of the homeless student's right to remain in the school of origin. For purposes of this policy, the school of origin means the school that the student last attended when permanently housed, or the school where the student was last enrolled including preschool. In determining the best interest of the student, the Board will consider:

1. Keeping the student in the school of origin unless contrary to wishes of parent or guardian;

2. Impact of mobility on admission;

3. Education, health, safety of the student;
4. Consider the views of an unaccompanied student;
5. Irrespective of whether the student lives with homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

The District will provide a written explanation, including the right to appeal to the student or parent/guardian if, the Board sends the student to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian.

Enrollment

A homeless student will be enrolled without undue or unreasonable delay. A homeless student will be enrolled even if their previous academic records, immunization records, proof of residence, or other documents are not immediately available. The District will ensure that homeless students, meeting eligibility standards, do not face barriers in accessing academic and extracurricular activities.

Transportation

The District will, upon parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth request, provide transportation to and from the school of origin as follows:

1. If the student continues to live in the District, transportation will be arranged to the school of origin.
2. If the student continues in their school of origin, but moves into another district, transportation will be arranged upon by the District of origin and the new District of residence.

Parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth will be fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services.

Homeless Liaison

The Board of Education has appointed *Mrs. Samantha Curley* as liaison for homeless students. The responsibilities of the liaison will include, but not be limited to:

1. Ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through

outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.

2. Establish practices designed to ensure the school enrollment and success of homeless students;

3. Assist with the enrollment of homeless students and provide assistance with obtaining academic and medical records;

4. Make school placement decisions based on the best interest of the child and wishes of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth;

5. Inform parents, guardians, or unaccompanied homeless students of the educational and related opportunities available to them;

6. Ensure that homeless students and their families have access to educational services including Head Start, Even Start and other preschool programs administered by the District;

7. Ensure that referrals are made to health care, dental, mental health and other appropriate services;

8. Ensure that homeless students are not isolated or stigmatized because of their status as homeless;

9. Handle enrollment disputes and ensure that disputes over the placement of homeless students are resolved in a timely manner consistent with the requirements of the McKinney Vento Act;

10. Provide/arrange transportation and inform the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth of the transportation services the school district must make available and assist homeless students in accessing transportation to and from school; and

11. Disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in places where homeless students receive services.

12. Ensure school personnel receives professional development and other support.

13. Ensure that unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school, have the opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic standards, are informed of their status as independent students under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act and their right to receive verification of this status.

All school personnel, District service providers and locally known advocates working with homeless families will be informed of the identity of the Homeless Liaison and the Homeless Liaison duties.

Disputes Over School Selection or Enrollment in a School

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school the following protocols will apply:

1. The homeless student will be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute;

2. The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth will be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision regarding school selection, enrollment, and related decisions concerning education services, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision; and

3. The homeless student, parent, or guardian will be referred to the Homeless Liaison, who will carry out the complaint resolution process described in the next section of this Regulation as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute.

4. At the request of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth, the District will provide for or arrange adequate or appropriate transportation to and from the school selected by the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. Inter-district transportation disputes will be resolved by DESE.

Dispute Resolution

Level I - A complaint regarding eligibility, school selection, enrollment or barriers to attending classes and participating in school activities of a homeless child shall first be presented orally and informally to the District's educational liaison for homeless children. If the complaint is not promptly resolved, the complainant may present a formal written complaint (grievance) to the educational liaison. The written charge must include the following: date of filing, description of alleged grievances, the name of the person or persons involved and a recap of the action taken during the informal charge stage. Within five (5) working days after receiving the complaint, the liaison shall state a decision in writing to the complainant, with supporting evidence and reasons. In addition, the liaison will inform the Superintendent of the formal complaint and the disposition.

Level II - Within five (5) working days after receiving the decision at Level I, the complainant may appeal the decision to the Superintendent by filing a written appeals package. This package

shall consist of the complainant's grievance and the decisions rendered at Level I. The Superintendent will arrange for a personal conference with the complainant at their earliest mutual convenience. Within five (5) working days after receiving the complaint, the Superintendent shall state a decision in writing to the complainant, with supporting evidence and reasons.

Level III - If resolution is not reached in Level II, a similar written appeals package shall be directed through the Superintendent to the Board of Education requesting a hearing before the Board at the next regularly scheduled or specially called meeting. The hearing before the Board may be conducted in closed session upon the request of either the Board or the complainant. Within thirty (30) working days after receiving the appeals package, the Board shall state its decision and reply in writing to the parties involved. For District purposes, the decision of the Board of Education is final.

Level IV – If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action taken at Level III, the Complainant may appeal the decision to the State Education Agency point of contact. Such appeal must be in writing and filed within five (5) days of Level III decision, and including:

1. School in which enrollment is sought and the basis for seeking enrollment;
2. Name and contact information for the parent or education decision-maker;
3. Best Interest notes and reports;
4. Copy of the previous appeal letter;
5. Copy of the decision recommended at Level III.

The appeal letter must be submitted to the State point of contact as well as the District's Superintendent.

Policy Dissemination

Copies of the Board of Education's Policy on Homeless Students will be presented to the County Welfare Office, County Office of the Division of Employment Security, the Juvenile Officer and to local law enforcement authorities.

Identification

Homeless students will be identified by referrals from community organizations and District personnel and by review of the District's enrollment forms.

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