

STUDENTS

Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

Students experiencing homelessness are those without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence in accordance with the definition of homeless children and youth in the federal McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act. An “unaccompanied homeless student” is a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and is homeless.

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families, to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate education (including public preschool education) provided to other students. Special attention will be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, the district will take reasonable steps to ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their homeless status.

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 programs, gifted and talented programs, and school nutrition programs.

District Liaison and Points of Contact

The Superintendent will designate an appropriate staff person to be the district’s liaison for homeless students and youth. The liaison may simultaneously serve as a coordinator for other federal programs. The liaison’s responsibilities are described in Procedure 3115P.

The district will establish a building point of contact in each elementary school, middle school and high school. The points of contact will be appointed by the principal of the designated school. The points of contact are responsible for identifying homeless students and unaccompanied homeless youth and connecting them with the district’s liaison for students experiencing homelessness. The district’s homeless student liaison is responsible for training the building points of contact.

Enrollment, Attendance, and School Stability

The district will not require proof of residency or any other information regarding an address for any child eligible for services of the district if the child does not have a legal residence. The district will enroll a child without a legal residence at the request of the child or the child’s parent or guardian.

Attendance options will be made available to homeless families on the same terms as other family residents in the district, including attendance rights acquired by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, and intra and inter-district choice options.

The district will, according to the homeless child's best interest:

1. Continue the child's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness if a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year, if the child becomes permanently housed during and academic year; or
2. Enroll the child in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child is actually living are eligible to attend.

In making a determination as to the homeless student's best interest the district will:

1. Presume that it is in the student's best interest to remain enrolled in their school of origin unless such enrollment is against the request of a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth;
2. Consider student-centered factors related to the child's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children, giving priority to the request of the child's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth;
3. If, after conducting the best interest determination based on the above, the district determines it is not in the child's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth, provide the parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, including information regarding the right to appeal; and
4. For unaccompanied youth, ensure that the district liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions, gives priority to the views of the unaccompanied youth, and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal.

The school selected in accordance with the above process will immediately enroll the homeless child, even if the child: (a) is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation; or (b) has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

The enrolling school will immediately contact the last school the child attended to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the child needs to obtain immunizations or other required health records, the enrolling school will immediately refer the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth, to the district liaison who will assist in obtaining necessary immunizations or screenings, or immunization or other required health records.

If there is a dispute about eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the

dispute, including all appeals. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will be provided a written explanation of any decisions made by the district or school related to school selection or enrollment (or informed if the student does not qualify for McKinney-Vento, if applicable) and their right to appeal such decisions. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will be referred to the district liaison who will carry out dispute resolution as described in Procedure 3115P.

The district will ensure that transportation is provided, upon request by the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth, to and from a homeless student's school of origin. If the school of origin is in the district and the student lives in the district, the district will provide the transportation. If the 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 cost equally.

Supports and Communication

The district, on an annual basis, will strongly encourage:

1. All school staff to annually review the video posted on the OSPI website on how to identify signs that indicate a student may be homeless, how to provide services and support to homeless students, and why this identification and support is critical to student success to ensure that homeless students are appropriately identified and supported; and
2. Every district-designated homeless student liaison to attend trainings provided by the state to ensure that homeless children and youth identified and served.

The district will include in materials that are shared with students at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment, information about services and support for homeless students (i.e., the brochure posted on the OSPI website).

The district will use a variety of communications each year to notify students and families about services and support available to them if they experience homelessness (e.g., distributing and collecting a universal annual housing intake survey, providing parent brochures directly to students and families, and posting information on the district's website).

Facilitating on-time grade level progression

For students experiencing homelessness, the district will implement the following procedures:

The district will waive specific courses required for graduation if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district; or

1. Provide reasonable justification for denial of the waiver. If a waiver is not granted to a student who would have qualified to graduate from their sending school district, the

district will provide an alternative means of obtaining required course-work so that the student may graduate on item.

2. The district will consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and will provide opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.
3. For students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, the district will grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of the withdrawal or transfer. When the district receives a transfer student in these circumstances, it will accept the student's partial credits, apply them to the student's academic progress or graduation or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the district.
4. In the event a student is transferring at the beginning of or during their junior or senior year of high school and is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, the district will work with the sending district to ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district if the student meets the graduation requirement of the sending district.
5. In the event a student has enrolled in three or more school districts as a high school student, has met state requirements, has transferred to the district, but is ineligible to graduate from the district after all alternatives have been considered, the district will waive its local requirements and ensure that the student receives a diploma.

Cross Reference: 3116 – Students in Foster Care
 3120 – Enrollment
 3231 – Student Records
 3413 – Student Immunization and Life-Threatening Health Conditions
 4218 – Language Access Plan

Legal References: RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences
 RCW 28A.320.145 Support for homeless students
 RCW 28A.320.142 Unaccompanied youth - Building point of contact-
 Duty of district homeless student liaison
 RCW 28A.320.192 On-time grade level progression and graduation of
 students who are homeless, dependent, or at-risk youth
 or children – Rules
 WAC 392-172A-01090 Homeless children
 WAC 392-172A-02085 Homeless children
 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. Elementary and Secondary
 Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every
 Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 42 U.S.C. §§ 11431-11436 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Classification: Essential

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