

STUDENTS

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 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 in a separate school or in a separate program within a school 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 education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

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

- A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- 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. Abandoned in hospitals;
- E. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations;
- F. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
- G. Are migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

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The superintendent will designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's McKinney-Vento liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison may simultaneously serve as a coordinator for other federal programs, provided that they are able to carry out the duties listed in the procedure that accompanies this policy.

If the district has identified more than ten unaccompanied youth, meaning youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and including youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, the principal of each middle and high school building will establish a point of contact for such youth. The point of contact is responsible for identifying homeless and unaccompanied youth and connecting them with the district's homeless student liaison. The district's homeless student liaison is responsible for training the building points of contact.

Best interest determination

In making a determination as to which school is in the homeless student's best interest to attend, the district will presume that it is in the student's best interest to remain enrolled in their school of origin unless such enrollment is against the wishes of a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth.

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

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian will be informed of the district's decision and the reasons therefor, (or informed if the student does not qualify for McKinney-Vento, if applicable) and their appeal rights in writing and in a language they can understand. 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 will 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, or denied or delayed due to missed application deadlines or fees, fines or absences at a previous school.

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If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student will 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 will be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, and in compliance with the state's Address Confidentiality Program when necessary. However, the district cannot demand emergency contact information in a form or manner that creates 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, or 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 and their families will 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 kitchens. The notice must be disseminated in a manner and form that parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth receiving such services can understand, including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in their native language. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students and will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined by the state-level (OSPI) coordinator for homeless children and youth programs.

The superintendent will:

- Strongly encourage district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers to annually review the video posted on the OSPI website on identification of student homelessness;
- Strongly encourage every district-designated homeless student liaison to attend trainings provided by the state on identification and serving homeless youth. Ensure that the district includes in materials provided to all 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).

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- 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, announcing the information at school-wide assemblies, posting information on the district's website).

Legal References: RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences
RCW 28A.320.145 Support for homeless students.
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 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
Chapter 28A.320 RCW Provisions applicable to all districts (new section created by 3SHB 1682, 2016 legislative session)

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