

LEA Homeless Education Policy

Homelessness exists in our community. A combination of high housing costs and poverty cause many families to lose their housing. Many young people leave their homes due to abuse, neglect and family conflict. Children and youth who have lost their housing live in a variety of places including motels, shelters, shared residences, transitional housing programs, cars, campgrounds and others. Their lack of permanent housing can lead to potentially serious physical, emotional, and mental consequences. This school district will ensure that all children and youth receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools. This district will also follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

It is the policy of our district to view children as individuals. Therefore, this policy will not refer to children as homeless; it will instead use the term children and youth in transition. Under federal law, children and youth in transition must have access to appropriate public education and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state- and district – wide assessment and accountability system. Our schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment. Information regarding this policy will be available to all students upon enrollment, provided to students who seek to withdraw from school, and posted in prominent places in the building.

Definitions

Children and youth in transition means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education, including preschool, and who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- 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 waiting foster care placement.
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.
- Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above. A child or youth will be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

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Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth. Enroll and enrollment mean attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

Immediate means without delay.

Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

School of origin means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Local liaison is the staff person(s) designated by our LEA and each LEA in the state as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the local homeless education liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Awareness/Identification

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaisons will identify children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The local liaisons, in conjunction with the Regional Office of Education, will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the local liaisons. School personnel will attend an annual in-service on the rights and needs of youth in transition. The local liaisons will also instruct school secretaries to inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the local liaison. Community partners in identification may include welfare departments and other social service agencies, faith-based organization, truancy and attendance officer, and legal services. The local liaisons will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district; where they are living; their academic achievement (including performance on state-and district wide assessments); and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education, or school transfers.

School Selections

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that housed students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent or youth's wishes. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years. Feasibility will be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth's wishes.

Potential feasibility considerations include:

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- The age of the child or youth
 - The distance of a commute and the impact it may have on the student's education
 - Personal safety issues
 - A student's need for special instruction (e.g., special education and related services)
 - The length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location
 - The time remaining in the school year
- 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.

Enrollment

The school selected for enrollment must enroll any child or youth in transition immediately. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency
- Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of student whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent, and previous schools or teachers.)
- Immunizations or immunizations/health/medical/physical records (if necessary, the school must refer students to the local liaisons to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunizations and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state registries, and school-or community-based clinics can initiate immunization when needed.)
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Any other document requirements
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes
- Any factors related to the student's living situation

Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or local liaison.

Transportation

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her school of origin. To avoid such forced school transfers, at a parent's request, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during pending disputes. The local liaisons will request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered only in determining the feasibility of placement in the school or origin based on potential

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harm to the student, as discussed above. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance. Schools and local liaisons will use the district transportation form to process transportation requests. Requests will be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the student in transition is living and attending school in this district, this district will arrange transportation. If the student in transition is living in this district, but attending school in another, or attending school in this district but living in another, this district will coordinate with the neighboring district to arrange transportation. It is this district's policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a student in transition missing school. If such a dispute arises, this district will not arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the ROE Area 3, Lead Liaison. In addition, to receiving transportation to and from the school of origin upon request, children and youth in transition will also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to housed students.

Services

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including:

- Transportation
- Title I, Part A services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and program for English Language Learners
- Vocation and technical education programs
- Gifted and talented programs
- Before-and after-school programs

The district recognizes that children and youth in transition suffer from disabilities at a disproportionate rate, yet frequently are not evaluated or provided appropriate special education and related services. To address this problem, evaluation of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability will be given priority and coordinated with students prior and subsequent schools as necessary to ensure the timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the district will designate expeditiously a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If participation of a surrogate parent in the student's education is needed prior to the appointment of a surrogate parent, the district will designate a temporary surrogate in accordance with the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the enrolling school will implement it immediately. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations will be held to avoid any disruption in appropriate services. When applying any district policy regarding tardiness and absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused. Our school district will follow state procedures to ensure that youth in transition and youth who are out of school are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services. School personnel will refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The local liaison will assist the school in making such referrals,

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as necessary. School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities to participate in their children's education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a form, manner, and language understandable to each parent.

Disputes:

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute? The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending. The school where the dispute arises will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer the parent or youth to the local liaisons immediately. The local liaison will ensure that the student is enrolled in the requested school and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and will resolve the dispute. The local liaison will keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition repeatedly. The parent, unaccompanied youth, or school district may appeal the school district's decision as provided in the state's dispute resolution process.

Free Meals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must allow the student access to free meals.

Pre School

Preschool education is a very important element of later academic success. Children in transition have experienced many difficulties accessing preschool opportunities. To facilitate preschool enrollment and attendance, the provisions of this policy will apply to preschools administered by our school district. Our district will ensure that children in transition receive priority enrollment in preschool programs operated by the district, including exempting children in transition from waiting.

Homeless Liaisons:**Jerry Butcher****Principal/Assist. Superintendent**
jbutcher@cesd317.org**217-357-3914****References**

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The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§11431 – 11436.

Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§6311 – 6315.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§1400 et seq.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, 42 U.S.C. §§1751 et seq.

June 5, 1992 Policy of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S.
Department of
Health and Human Services.

Add relevant state laws/regulations here:

Sample Local Educational Agency (LEA) Policy (cont.)