HOMELESS STUDENT GUIDELINES

Definitions

**Homeless students** are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, which include the following conditions:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
3. Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters.
4. Abandoned in hospitals.
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings.

8. Living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples.

9. Living as run-away children.

10. Abandoned or forced out of homes by parents/guardians or caretakers.

11. Living as school age unwed mothers in houses for unwed mothers if they have no other living accommodations.

"**Unaccompanied homeless youth**" includes any child who is "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian." This includes youth who have run away from home, been thrown out of their home, been abandoned by parents or guardians, or separated from their parents for any other reason. School of origin is defined as the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

School of origin is generally determined by the last school that the student was enrolled and actively attended while permanently housed.

Enrollment/Placement

When a student has become homeless between academic years or during an academic year, the District shall according to the student’s best interest:

1. Continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness;

OR

1. Enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

When a homeless student seeks to enroll in the School District, s/he shall generally have two school options: (1) his/her school of origin or (2) his/her school of residency (neighborhood school) based upon the address where the student is currently staying. All questions regarding enrollment of homeless students shall be directed to the School District’s McKinney-Vento Liaison, Tim Messina 412-771-3213 x4020

Children experiencing homelessness are often highly mobile and may not stay in the same school district each night or each week. This is particularly true regarding children who stay overnight in vehicles, those who stay with different family members or friends, or those who receive services from agencies, organizations or networks which facilitate overnight accommodations in multiple school districts. These children should not be forced to change school districts every time their overnight accommodations change. Rather, these children are entitled to attend school in any school district where a parent, guardian, an adult caring for them, or where an unaccompanied child:

• spends the greatest percentage of his or her time

or

• has a substantial connection such as where he or she is: (1) regularly receiving day shelter or other services involving any of the sixteen McKinney Vento Activities (42 U.S.C. 11433(d)) for individuals who are homeless; (2) conducting daily living activities; or (3) staying overnight on a recurring basis.

To the extent feasible and unless the parent/guardian, caretaker or unaccompanied youth requests otherwise, a homeless student shall continue to be enrolled in his/her school of origin while s/he remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which s/he obtains permanent housing. If a student is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, the District liaison will consider the views of the student in determining where s/he will be enrolled. The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment pursuant to District policies (such as proof of age, medical records, previous academic records or proof of residency). Homeless families are not required to prove residency regarding school enrollment. However, the District may require a parent/guardian, caretaker or unaccompanied youth to submit contact information. The District liaison may contact the previous school for oral confirmation of immunizations, and the school shall request records from the previous district, pursuant to Board policy.

If the District is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the District shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's placement.

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parents/guardians shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision, their right to appeal and the procedures to us for the appeal.

When a Student Becomes Permanently Housed

Homeless students may remain in the school they attend at the time they become permanently housed for the remainder of the academic year in which such housing was secured.

Transportation will be provided when a student becomes permanently housed if it exists in relation to the student’s new residence and school. If transportation is not currently available, all efforts will be made through other means for the remainder of the school year. If transportation

is not available or feasible from the location of permanent housing, parent/guardian will resume responsibility for transportation.

Services

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other District students including, but not limited to, transportation services; school nutrition programs; vocational programs and technical education; preschool programs; programs for students with limited English proficiency; and educational services for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students. All efforts shall be made to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are not stigmatized or segregated based on their status as homeless.

Homeless children are categorically eligible for free meal benefits under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Transportation

The district shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend within the school district.

If the school of origin is outside district boundaries or homeless students live in another district but will attend their school of origin in this district, the school districts shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation. If they cannot agree, the cost shall be split equally.

Stability and Continuity

District policies and procedures are to be implemented in a manner that fosters continuity and school stability for homeless children in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act.

Professional Development

Relevant school employees shall participate in professional development in-service training on homeless procedures on an least a bi-annual basis.