

Students Experiencing Homelessness - Enrollment rights and Services

Definitions

1. **Homeless children and youth** mean individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; living in motels, parks or campgrounds; or children or youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation by human beings; or children or youth living in cars, abandoned buildings, substandard housing or similar situations; or migratory children living in circumstances like those described above. "Substandard housing" may be determined by considering factors such as whether the setting in which the child or youth is living lacks water, electricity, or heat; is infested with vermin or mold; lacks a working kitchen or toilet, or presents unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities. Cities, counties, and states have varying housing codes that further define housing deemed substandard by law.
2. **Unaccompanied youth** mean a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and includes youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act.
3. **School of origin** means the school or preschool that a child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. When a child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.
4. **Best interest determination** means that the district must make school placement decisions for students and youth experiencing homelessness based on their best interest, as determined by student centered factors including impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety. Priority should be given to the request of the child or the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth. Placement of siblings should also be considered.
5. **Excess cost of transportation** means the difference between what the district normally spends to transport a student to school and the cost of transporting a student experiencing homelessness (SEH) to school. For example, there is no excess cost of transportation if the district provides transportation to a SEH by a regular bus route. However, if the district provides special transportation to a SEH that is not part of a regular bus route and not covered by the state transportation funding formula (e.g., summer school transportation, extracurricular activities, etc.), the entire cost would be considered excess costs of transportation. The additional cost of the district's re-routing of busses to transport a SEH can be considered excess cost of transportation. The district may use McKinney-Vento subgrant funds and Title I, Part A funds to defray the excess cost of transportation for SEH.

Identification

The district will:

1. Use a housing questionnaire in its enrollment process. The questionnaire will be distributed universally to avoid stigmatizing children and youths experiencing homelessness and their families;
2. Ensure that referral forms used to identify and support SEH are accessible and easy to use;
3. Include its homeless liaison's contact information on its website;
4. Provide materials for SEH and parents, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in their native language;
5. As practicable, provide annual guidance for school staff on the definition of homelessness, signs of homelessness, the impact of homelessness on students and steps to take when a potentially homeless student is identified, including how to connect the student with appropriate housing and support service providers;
6. Develop interagency partnerships to serve families and youths experiencing homelessness; and
7. Work with the state homelessness coordinator to facilitate services to families and youths made homeless by natural disasters or other catastrophic events.

Placement and enrollment

The district will do the following:

1. When deciding placement, presume that allowing the SEH to remain in their school of origin is in the student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth;
2. If the parent/guardian contests the district's decision, make a best interest determination based on factors such as the impact of mobility on the student's educational achievement, health, and safety. If the best interest determination is requested by an unaccompanied youth, the process will give priority to the views of the youth;
3. After conducting a best interest determination, provide to the parent/guardian of the student in a timely manner and in a language, they can understand, a written explanation of the final decision and the right to appeal the decision (see Dispute Resolution Procedure, below);
4. Pending resolution of disputes that arise over eligibility, school selection or enrollment, immediately enroll a SEH in the school in which the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth seeks enrollment;
5. Avoid delay or denial of enrollment of SEH, even if they have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness or are unable to produce records required for enrollment (e.g., previous academic records, immunization records, health records, proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certificates);

6. Avoid requirements for student contact information to be in a form or manner that creates a barrier for SEH;
7. Provide transportation for SEH to their school or preschool of origin. Once the student has obtained permanent housing, the district will continue to provide such transportation until the end of the academic year. If the SEH remains in their school of origin but begins living in an area served by district, the district of origin and the district in which the homeless student is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for the student's transportation to and from their school of origin. If the districts cannot reach agreement, the responsibility and costs for transportation will be shared equally;
8. Continue to provide transportation to their school of origin pending the outcome of enrollment or transportation disputes;
9. Immediately contact the school last attended by the SEH to obtain relevant academic and other records;

District's Homeless Liaison

The district liaison will ensure that:

1. Children and youths experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel and through coordination of activities with other entities and agencies;
2. Children and youths experiencing homelessness enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school;
3. Families, children, and youths experiencing homelessness receive educational services for which such families, children and youths are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by the district and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;
4. SEH are identified and provided proper access to free school meals.
5. The parents or guardians of children and youths experiencing homelessness are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
6. Public notice of the educational rights of children and youths experiencing homelessness is disseminated where such children receive services (e.g., schools, family shelters, soup kitchens);
7. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with Paragraph C, Placement, and enrollment, above; and
8. The parent or guardian of a child or youth experiencing homelessness, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected;
9. Unaccompanied youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youths, are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the

[Higher Education Act of 1965](#) (HEA) ([20 U.S.C. 1087vv](#)) for federal student aid purposes, and their right to receive verification of this status from the local liaison;

10. Barriers that prevent SHE from receiving credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school are identified and removed;
11. Affirm whether students SEH meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to qualify them for HUD homeless assistance programs and refer homeless families and students to housing and other services;
12. Assist parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth in obtaining immunizations, health screenings, guardianship records and other documents normally required for enrollment; and
13. Assist unaccompanied youths in connecting with needed supports such as housing assistance, health care and other services.

In addition to the duties and responsibilities listed above, the district liaison will work to improve systems to identify SEH and coordinate with the district's nutrition program to ensure that each SEH has proper access to free school meals, and that applicable accountability and reporting requirements are satisfied.

The district will inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the district homeless liaison.

Dispute Resolution Procedure

If there is an enrollment or school selection dispute, the student has the right to remain or be admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.

1. Notification of Appeal Process

If the district seeks to place a child experiencing homelessness in a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent, the district will inform the parent or the unaccompanied youth of the right to appeal. The district will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with written notice including:

- a. An explanation of the child's placement and contact information for the district and the OSPI homeless liaison, including their roles;
- b. Notification of the right to appeal(s);
- c. Notification of the right to enroll in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute;
- d. A description of the dispute resolution process including a petition form that can be returned to the school to initiate the process and timelines; and
- e. A summary of the federal legislation governing placement of SHE (McKinney-Vento Act).

2. Appeal to the School District Liaison – Level I

If the parent or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the district's placement decision, he or she may appeal by filing a written request for dispute resolution with the school, the district's homeless liaison, or a designee. If submitted to the school, the request will be immediately forwarded to the district's homeless liaison. The request for dispute resolution must be submitted within fifteen business days of receiving notification of the district's placement.

- a. The liaison must log the complaint including a brief description of the situation and reason for the dispute and the date and time of the complaint was filed. A copy of the complaint must be forwarded to the liaison's supervisor and the district's superintendent.
- b. Within five business days of the receiving the complaint, the liaison must provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written decision and notification of the right to appeal. It is the responsibility of the district to verify that individual's receipt of the Level I decision.
- c. If the parent or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal the district's Level I decision, notification of the intent to proceed to Level II must be provided to the district liaison within ten business days of receipt of the Level I decision. The liaison will provide the parent with an appeals package containing:
 - I. The complaint filed with the district liaison at Level I;
 - II. The decision rendered at Level I; and
 - III. Additional information provided by the parent, unaccompanied youth and/or homeless liaison.

3. Appeal to the School Superintendent – Level II

- a.) The parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the district liaison's decision to the superintendent or designee using the appeals package provided at Level I. This meeting may be held over video or phone conference if required due to a school building closure or if the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth is unable to attend in-person, provided the same opportunity for appeal is given and the same rights are provided to the family or youth.
- b.) The superintendent or designee will arrange for a personal conference to be held with the parent or unaccompanied youth within five business days of receiving the Level I appeals package.
- c.) Within five business days of the conference with the parent or unaccompanied youth the superintendent or designee will provide that individual with a written decision with supporting evidence and notification of their right to appeal to the OSPI. It is the responsibility of the district to verify that individual's receipt of the Level II decision.
- d.) A copy of the appeals packages along with the superintendent or designee's decision made at Level II will be forwarded to the district's homeless liaison.

- e.) If the parent or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal the district's Level II decision to OSPI, notification of intent to proceed to Level III must be provided to the district homeless liaison within ten business days of receipt of the Level II decision.

4. Appeal to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction – Level III

- a. The district superintendent or designee will forward a copy of the Level II decision and all written documentation to the OSPI homeless liaison within five days of rendering a decision. The district will submit the entire dispute package to the OSPI in one complete package by U.S. mail.
- b. The OSPI homeless education coordinator or designee, along with the appropriate agency director, and/or agency assistant superintendent will make a final decision within fifteen business days of receiving the appeal.
- c. OSPI's decision will be forwarded to the district's homeless liaison. The district liaison will distribute the decision to the parent or unaccompanied youth and the superintendent.
- d. OSPI's decision will be the final resolution for placement of a homeless child or youth in the district.
- e. The district will retain the record of all disputes, at each level, related to the placement of children and youths experiencing homelessness.

Inter-district Disputes

If districts are unable to resolve a dispute regarding the placement of a SEH, either district may submit a written request to OSPI seeking resolution.

OSPI will resolve the dispute within 10 business days of notification of the dispute and inform all interested parties of the decision.

The decision made by OSPI shall be the final resolution between the disputing districts for placement of a homeless child or youth in a district.

Adopted:	08/30/2001
Amended:	12/13/2006
	03/28/2007
	08/25/2010
	01/09/2013
	11/18/2015
	11/30/2016
	03/24/2018
	04/10/2019
	04/29/2020
	10/21/2022
Superintendent:	Dr. Shelley Redinger
	Dr. Adam Swinyard