

Each student of a homeless individual and each homeless student has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other students. The Board of Trustees directs all District schools to admit students who are homeless regardless of residence and irrespective of whether the homeless student is able to produce records normally required for enrollment. The Board may not require an out-of-District attendance agreement and tuition for a homeless student.

Schools in the St. Maries Joint School District No. 41 will work to ensure that students and youth who are homeless are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment. The District will also strive to prevent stigma against students who are homeless.

Information regarding this Policy, including the educational rights of students and youth identified as homeless will be distributed to all students upon enrollment and once during the school year, provided to students who seek to withdraw from school, and posted in every school in the District, as well as other places where students, youth, and families who are homeless receive services, including family and youth shelters, motels, campgrounds, welfare departments, health departments, and other social service agencies.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Students and youth experiencing homelessness means students 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:

1. Students 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 a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals, or are awaiting placement in foster care;
2. Students and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
3. Students and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting; and
4. Migratory students and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A student or youth will be considered to be homeless for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

*Unaccompanied youth* means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who meets the definition of homeless as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.

*Enroll and enrollment* means attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

*Immediate* means without delay.

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

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

*Local liaison* is the staff person designated by St. Maries Joint School District No. 41 and each District 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.

The Superintendent or designee shall review and revise rules or procedures that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students and youths. In reviewing and revising such procedures, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, medical records requirements, guardianship issues, uniform or dress code requirements, residence, birth certificates, school records, and other documentation. Students shall be enrolled in school immediately, without delay regarding any required documents. Once such documents are obtained, they shall be maintained so that they are available in a timely fashion when the student enters a new school or school district. The District shall serve students regardless of whether they are in the custody of a parent or guardian.

The Superintendent or designee shall also review and revise rules and practices to ensure that homeless students have equal access to educational services. Homeless students shall have access to services comparable to services offered to other students, including but not limited to:

1. Transportation services;
2. Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, such as Title I;
3. Educational programs for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency;
4. Programs in vocational and technical education, as well as programs for gifted and talented students; and
5. The school nutrition program.

The Superintendent or designee shall give special attention to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students and youths not currently attending school. The Superintendent or designee shall appoint a liaison for homeless students. The liaison shall act to ensure that:

1. Homeless students are identified;
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the District's schools;
3. Homeless students who have separated from school are provided with opportunities and assistance to reenroll;
4. Students and families have the opportunity to receive educational services for which they are eligible;
5. Parents or guardians are informed of educational and other opportunities available to their students;
6. Parents or guardians are given opportunities to participate in their student's education;
7. Parents or guardians are informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the student's school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services;
8. Public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where students and youth receive services;
9. Channels of communication are established between the liaison and local Head Start staff if applicable;
10. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with state and federal law as well as District policy;
11. Unaccompanied youth, as defined in the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement;
12. Students who lack immunization(s) or other medical records are assisted in obtaining these;

13. The names of all homeless students shall be submitted to the local school nutrition office so that those students can receive free breakfast and lunch. This need not be accompanied by an application to receive free or reduced meals;
14. Unaccompanied students are assisted in selecting and enrolling in a school, and that they are provided with notice of the right to appeal an enrollment decision; and
15. Parents, school personnel, and others are informed of the rights of homeless students and youth.

The homeless liaison will also coordinate with, and seek support from, the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other such organizations and agencies. Coordination will include conducting outreach and training. Both public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the liaison and the schools in implementing this Policy.

#### **IDENTIFICATION**

To whatever extent is possible, homeless students and youth in St. Maries Joint School District No. 41, both in and out of school, will be identified.

Data will be collected on the number of students and youth experiencing homelessness in the District; where they are living; their academic achievement (including State and local assessments); and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education, or school transfers.

#### **SCHOOL SELECTION**

Each student and youth identified as homeless has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that houses students who live in the attendance area in which the student or youth is actually living, as well as take advantage of any District policy relating to open enrollment and under State law.

Therefore, in selecting as school, students and youth who are homeless will remain at their school of origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent's/guardian's or youth's wishes. Students may remain at their school of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same procedure will be followed is a student or youth loses his or her housing during the summer. 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.

If a student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the District shall provide a written

explanation of its decision and the right to appeal, whether or not the individual disputes the placement. Such explanation should be completed, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth can understand. This written explanation shall include:

1. Contact information for the homeless student liaison and state coordinator, with a brief description of their roles;
2. A simple, detachable form to initiate the dispute resolution process. One (1) copy of the form should be retained by the school, and another copy should be returned to the parent/guardian or youth for their records when it is submitted;
3. A step-by-step description of how to dispute the school's decision;
4. Notice of the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute;
5. Notice that "immediate enrollment" includes full participation in all school activities;
6. Notice of the right to appeal to the State if the District-level resolution is not satisfactory; and
7. Timelines for resolving District- and State-level appeals.

If an unaccompanied youth or parent/guardian chooses to appeal a placement decision, the District will refer him or her to the homeless student liaison, who shall expeditiously facilitate this process.

### **ENROLLMENT**

Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

1. Proof of residency;
2. Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of a 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.);
3. Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, the school must refer students to the local liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records.);
4. Proof of guardianship;

5. Birth certificate;
6. Unpaid school fees;
7. Lack of clothing that conforms to dress code; and
8. Any factor related to the student's living situation.

Unaccompanied students must 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**

Parents and unaccompanied students will be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance. At a parent's or unaccompanied student's request, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for a student or youth experiencing homelessness. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the student or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during pending disputes.

It is St. Maries Joint School District No. 41's policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a homeless student missing school. If such a dispute arises, the District will arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. In addition to receiving transportation to and from the school of origin upon request, students and youth who are homeless will also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to housed students.

### **DISPUTES**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this Policy, the student or youth experiencing homelessness 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 who is homeless to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending.

If agreement cannot be reached between the parties regarding the educational placement or enrollment status of the student, then the District shall promptly seek further assistance from the State Coordinator of Homeless Education to review and determine within ten (10) business days how the student's best interests will be served. All interested parties will be expeditiously informed of the State's determination in writing. The decision of the State Department of Education shall constitute final resolution.

