

Hardee County District Schools

McKinney-Vento Homeless Student Policy

It is the policy of the Hardee County School board that homeless students are afforded the same free appropriate public education as provided to other students and have access to the educational and other services that they need so that they have the opportunity to meet the same challenging Florida academic achievement standards to which all students are held. Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall have access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs administered by the School District.

Homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The District shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Definitions

Homeless Education Liaison

The District will designate an appropriate staff person able to carry out the duties described in the McKinney-Vento Act, as the district's liaison for homeless children and youth. His/her duties are communicated to district and school personnel and appropriate community agencies and providers. The District Homeless Liaison shall make a final determination of homeless status on a case-by-case basis.

For purposes of this policy, pursuant to Federal and State law, homeless children and youth are defined by the McKinney –Vento Act as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and include those who meet any of the following criteria:

- A. share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- B. live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- C. live in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. are abandoned in hospitals;

E. have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

F. live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

G) are migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in A) through G).

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, an unaccompanied homeless youth is a child or youth that is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and is found by the District's Liaison for Homeless Children to be an unaccompanied homeless youth eligible for services under Federal law.

Services to Homeless Children and Youth/Enrollment

The District shall remove barriers to identifying homeless children and youth and to the enrollment and retention of homeless students in schools in the District. Homeless students shall be enrolled immediately, even if they do not have the necessary enrollment documentation or otherwise meet enrollment including:

- immunization and health records
- proof of residency
- guardianship
- birth certificate
- school records
- uniform or dress code requirements
- outstanding fees, fines, or absences
- Or other required documentation.

The District will remove barriers to:

- Identifying homeless children and youth
- Immediately enroll homeless children and youth to a qualified school
- Enrolling and retaining of homeless children and youth in school
- Provide access to homeless children to public preschool programs administered by the district

- provide appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by homeless children and youth while attending a prior school
- provide access for homeless children and youth to academic and extracurricular activities.

The District will coordinate district programs and collaborate with other school districts, community service providers and organizations, including:

- local social services and other community agencies to provide support to homeless students and their families;
- other school districts regarding homeless student-related transportation; transfer of school records, and other inter-district activities, as needed;
- housing authorities; and
- ESE.

Further, the Homeless Liaison will assist, to the extent feasible, the homeless students and their parents(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school.

No Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

The District will keep homeless students in the school of origin, that is, the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or last enrolled, including a preschool. The eligible school is the school of origin, the school zoned for the address where the student is temporarily residing, or another school which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend.

The Designated Receiving school includes the next level school, elementary from prekindergarten, middle from elementary, high from middle, that a homeless child or youth, whose homelessness continues into the next school year, may attend when that next level school is the district designated school for those students in the homeless student's school of origin [s.722(g)(3)(l)(ii)].

Enroll and enrollment include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

The District's Homeless Student's Policy assures that:

- A homeless child or youth may continue their education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year;
- Keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is presumed to be in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- When considering placement in a school other than the child's or youth's school of origin, the district will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student's best interest;
- When a school other than the school of origin is selected, will remove barriers to enrollment and enroll homeless children and youths immediately, even if they cannot produce records or otherwise meet enrollments including:
 - Previous academic records
 - Immunizations or other health records and
 - Birth certificate and
 - Proof of residency and
 - Guardianship
 - Uniform or dress code requirements
 - Outstanding fees, fines, or absences
 - Other required documentation
- The eligible school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth missed an application or enrollment deadline during any period of homelessness.

Comparable Services

The district's Homeless Student's Policy assures that:

- A homeless student who becomes permanently housed during the academic year, may remain at their school of origin for the remainder of the academic year and continue to receive all McKinney-Vento Act benefits
- Children and youths experiencing homelessness, and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, will have access to all available academic and extracurricular activities for which they meet relevant eligibility criteria
- Unaccompanied homeless high school youth will receive counseling to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education
- Each school provides services to homeless children and youths that are comparable to services offered to non-homeless students in their school, including the following :
 - Transportation services;
 - Educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria;
 - Title I;
 - ESE;
 - Educational programs for English learners;
 - Programs in career and technical education;
 - Programs for gifted and talented students ;
 - School nutrition programs;
 - Preschool programs administered by the LEA

Student Records

The District's Homeless Student's Policy assures that records will be:

- Maintained for each homeless child or youth, including:
 - Immunization or other required health records;
 - Academic records;
 - Guardianship records; and
 - Evaluations for special services [s.722(g)(3)(D)];
- Made available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school [s.722(g)(3)(D)(i)];
- Held confidential in a manner consistent with section 444 of the General Education Provision Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) [s.722(g)(3)(D)(ii)].

- Treated as a student education record, and shall not be deemed to be directory information, under section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) [s.722(g)(3)(G)].

Transportation

The district's Homeless Student's Policy assures that:

- Transportation to and from a child's or youth's school of origin will be provided or arranged, at the request of the parent or guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied child or youth, the district's designated liaison for homeless children and youth.
- When the child's or youth's living arrangements are in an area served by another school district (district of residence), this school district (district of service) will coordinate with the district of residence to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child or youth with transportation to and from the school of origin.

Disputes: Eligibility, School Selection, and Enrollment

The District 's Homeless Student's Policy assures that:

- When considering placement in a school other than the child's or youth's school of origin, the district will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student's best interest [s.722(g)(3)(B)(ii)].
- When the district determines that a placement other than the school of origin is in the best interest, the district will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth with
 - A written explanation
 - In a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, and
 - Information on the right to appeal the placement determination.

During a school selection dispute,

- The child or youth will either remain enrolled in the student's school of origin or shall be immediately enrolled in the eligible school in which enrollment is sought, either the school zoned for the address where the student is residing or another school which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend, pending final resolution of the dispute including all available appeals;
- The parent or guardian of the child or youth or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth shall be provided with a written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by the school or the district, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions;
- The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the district's designated homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.