

## **JFABD—Admission of Homeless Students**

### **Free Appropriate Education**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures that all children and youth who are homeless receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools.

White Pine Charter School will ensure that children and youth who are homeless are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment.

Information regarding this policy, including the educational rights of children and youth identified as homeless will be distributed to all students upon enrollment and once during the school year, and provided to students who seek to withdraw from school.

### **Definitions**

Children and youth experiencing homelessness 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 a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting placement in foster care.
- Children 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.
- 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 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/guardian 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.

Administrator, or designee, is the liaison for carrying out the duties assigned to the local homeless education liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

### **Identification**

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the Administrator, or designee, will identify children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The Administrator, or designee, will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth as in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the Administrator, or designee,. The Administrator, or designee, 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 Administrator, or designee,.

Community partners in identification may include: family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in centers, welfare departments and other social service agencies, street outreach teams, faith-based organizations, truancy and attendance officers, local homeless coalitions and legal services.

The Administrator, or designee, 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 Selection**

Each child 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 child or youth is actually living.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth who are homeless 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 homeless 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 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.

### **Enrollment**

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have school enrollment documents readily available. Nonetheless, the school must immediately enroll any child or youth in transition. 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 students 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 immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, the school must refer students to the Administrator, or designee, to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records.)
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of clothing that conforms to dress code
- Any factor related to the student's living situation

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

### **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 shall be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation shall be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during the pendency of disputes. The Administrator, or designee, shall request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will only be considered in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential 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.

### **Services**

Children and youth experiencing homelessness will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students, including:

- Transportation
- Title I, Part A services - Children and youth identified as homeless are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners
- Vocational and technical education programs
- Gifted and talented programs
- Before- and after-school programs
- Pre-School - Homeless children with disabilities will be referred for preschool services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Administrator, or designee, will collaborate with Head Start and other preschool programs.

The School 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, evaluations of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary, to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the School shall expeditiously designate a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall then be conducted expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provision of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

When applying any School policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused.

### **Free Meals**

The Board 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, evaluations of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary, to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation.

When necessary, the district shall expeditiously designate a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall then be conducted expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provision of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

### **Disputes**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child 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.

The school 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 Administrator, or designee, immediately.

The Administrator, or designee, 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 as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth will be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute.

**Training**

The Administrator, or designee, will conduct training regarding Title X requirements and sensitivity/awareness activities for all School staff.

- References*
- Idaho Code § 33-1404*
  - 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.*