

HOMELESS STUDENTS

It is the policy of Weston County School District No. 7 that every child will have equal access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Homeless children or youth, or children and youth in transition, have the same rights to FAPE as do other children, and the district is committed to assuring that those rights are fully protected and honored. Any person or agency who is aware of any child of school age who meets the definition of a child or youth in transition, or in the event of the enrollment of a student who meets the definition of a child or youth in transition, the person, agency, or principal of the school where the student may be enrolled is requested to complete the attached referral form and send it to:

Name: Dr. Summer Stephens
Title: Superintendent
School: Weston County School District #7
Phone: 307 468-2461
Address: P.O. Box 470, Upton, WY 82730

The person designated above will respond to the referral to assist in developing an action plan to provide the students with a free appropriate public education as required in Title X, Part C (McKinney-Vento).

DEFINITIONS

Children and youth in transition 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 lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.

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 in transition 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 is in transition as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.

Enroll and enrollment mean attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

Immediate means without delay.

Parent 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.

IDENTIFICATION

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison will identify children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The local liaison 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 local liaison. The local liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the local liaison. Community partners in identification may include the following: 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 local liaison 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.

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 available readily. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment

must enroll any child or youth in transition immediately. 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 local liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state registries and school-or community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.)

Proof of guardianship.

Birth certificate:

Any other document requirements.

Unpaid school fees.

Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes.

Any factor related to the student's living situation.

Unaccompanied youth must also 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

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 will be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during pending disputes. The local liaison will request transportation to and from the school of origin for

unaccompanied youth. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Schools and local liaisons will consult the district transportation director to process transportation requests. Requests will be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the student in transition is living and attending school in this district, this district will arrange transportation. If the student in transition is living in this district but attending school in another, or attending school in this district but living in another, this district will coordinate with the neighboring district to arrange transportation. It is this district's policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a student in transition missing school. If such a dispute arises, this 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, children and youth in transition will also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to housed students.

SERVICES

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including:

Transportation (as described above).

Title I, Part A, services (as described below).

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.

The district 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 will be given priority and coordinated with students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary to ensure the timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the district will designate expeditiously a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If participation of a surrogate parent in the student's education is needed prior to the appointment of a

surrogate parent, the district will designate a temporary surrogate in accordance with the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school will implement it immediately. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations will 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 district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused. Our school district will follow state procedures to ensure that youth in transition and youth who are out of school are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services. School personnel will refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The local liaison will assist the school in making such referrals, as necessary.

School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a form, manner and language understandable to each parent.

DISPUTES

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The challenging school district must continue to provide transportation and other school services to the student until the dispute is resolved.

The dispute resolution process begins at the time a school or school district challenges the right of a parent, guardian, or person in parental relationship to a homeless child, to enroll a child or to continue a child's enrollment in school or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth's right to enroll or to continue enrollment in school.

When a school or district challenges the enrollment of the child or unaccompanied youth, the school or school district must provide written notice of the challenge to the district Homeless Education Liaison (Liaison) and the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth, through the Liaison. The written notice shall be provided within two (2) business days, and will be in clear, easy-to-understand language.

The Liaison shall inform the representative of the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth of the student's or youth's rights to appeal the decision of the school or school district. This notice shall include a form to be completed by the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth should he or she decide to appeal the school district's enrollment decision.

The Liaison shall assist the child or youth's representative, or the unaccompanied homeless youth, to complete the appeal form within ten (10) business days of the school or school district's challenge to the child or youth's enrollment.

During this time, if requested, WDE may provide technical assistance to the school district regarding its decision by notifying the school district as to the requirements of McKinney-Vento and other applicable state and federal laws.

Upon receipt of an appeal form, a school district will have five (5) business days to schedule an informal hearing. The hearing shall be convenient to the needs of the representative of the homeless student.

During the hearing, the school district shall discuss the considerations that led to the enrollment decision.

In cases where an agreement cannot be reached at the local level, the Liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the WDE State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth within five (5) business days of the informal hearing.

Upon review of the LEA and parent information, and within ten (10) business days of receipt of the materials, WDE will issue a decision. The decision of WDE will be final. A written decision will be distributed to all parties in the dispute.

FREE MEALS

Hunger and poor nutrition are obvious barriers to learning. To help ensure that children and youth in transition are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the district nutrition office for immediate processing.

TITLE I, PART A

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services. The trauma and instability of homelessness put students at sufficient risk of academic

regression to warrant additional support. The district will reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to children and youth in transition attending non-participating schools. The amount reserved will be determined by a formula based upon the per-pupil Title I, Part A, expenditure and developed jointly by the local liaison and the Title I director. Reserved funds will be used to provide education-related support services to children and youth in transition, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers that prevent regular attendance.

Our district's Title I plan will be coordinated with our McKinney-Vento services, through collaboration between the Title I director and the local liaison. Children and youth in transition will be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education Regulations and Policy Guidance.

TRAINING

The local liaison will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for the LEA and school staff at least once each year. The trainings and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to children and youth in transition.

COORDINATION

The local liaison will coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other organizations and agencies. Coordination will include conducting outreach and training to those agencies and participating in the local continuum of care, homeless coalition, homeless steering committee and other relevant groups. Both public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the local liaison and our schools in implementing this policy.

REVISED POLICY

ADOPTION DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2001

REVISION DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2016