

Homeless Education Policy and Procedures

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Policy

It is the policy of the board to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational programs, have an opportunity to meet the same academic standards, are not segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youths

The term "homeless children and youths" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youths who:

- are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
- are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- are living in emergency shelters
- are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement
- have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- runaway children or children who are abandoned
- migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition.

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with parents or in the case of unaccompanied youth the local educational agency liaison.

Identification

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison will identify students experiencing homelessness during enrollment by ensuring the following:

- Family to complete McKinney-Vento Enrollment Questionnaire.
- Liaison will follow-up with family to obtain additional information, if needed.
- Liaison will post the Educational Rights of Homeless Students Posters at enrollment counters.
- Liaison will include the Educational Rights of Homeless Students in the enrollment packet.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison will identify students experiencing homelessness during the academic year by ensuring the following:

- Liaison will train all staff who have interaction with students including the following:
 - Bus Drivers
 - Teachers
 - Cafeteria Workers
 - Counselors
 - School Resource Officers
 - Enrollment Counselors
 - Front Office Staff
- Liaison will provide the Educational Rights of Homeless Students two additional times during the academic year in one or more of the following means:
 - Newsletters
 - Pamphlets
 - Student Handbook
 - Website
 - Etc.

Enrollment

Montessori Academy shall immediately enroll the child/youth, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment. These include items such as immunization records, birth certificate, and school records. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. Lack of uniform or supplies will not be a deterrent.

The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" are defined to mean attending school and participating fully in school activities.

Guardianship

For purposes of school placement, any parent, guardian or person in loco parentis who has legal or physical custody of a homeless child or youth shall be able to enroll that child or youth in Montessori Academy.

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students, such as

- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as ESL or special education programs
- Programs for "At Risk" students
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- School nutrition programs
- Title I services
- After School programs

Transportation

At the request of the parent, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local agency, liaison or designee, transportation will be provided for homeless children to Montessori Academy for the duration of the school year.

Once permanent housing is found the family has a choice to stay in the school they are attending, school of origin or attend the school where they have found permanent

housing. Permanent housing is defined as any signed lease or long-term approved living situation. Self-paying day to day in a motel is not considered permanent housing.

Local Educational Agency Liaison

The Executive Director of Montessori Academy will be the Local Educational Agency Liaison for homeless children and youths. The Local Educational Agency Liaison or designee shall ensure that:

- homeless children and youths are voluntarily identified by all school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies
- homeless children and youth enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school.
- homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services.
- the parents or guardians of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the child/youth.
- public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in such public places as schools, meal sites, shelters and other locations frequented by low income families.
- compliance with all policies and procedures and mediate enrollment disputes
- the parents or guardians of a homeless child or youth, and unaccompanied youth, are informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin or to the school that is selected
- coordination of services between Montessori Academy and other homeless family service providers.
- assistance is provided to children and youth who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- students are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless
- programs for homeless students are coordinated with other federal and local programs

Disputes

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The Local Educational Liaison shall carry out the dispute process as expeditiously as possible after receiving the notice of the dispute. Appeals will go to the State Level. The appellant must submit a written "State Level Notice of Appeal" and copy of the LEA's decision to the Homeless Education Coordinator no later than seven (7) work days after receiving written notification of the district level decision. Within seven (7) work days, convene a panel of at least two (2) Arizona Department of Education employees. This panel shall review the entire record of the dispute, including any written statements submitted, and make a determination based on the child or youth's best interest. The determination of the panel shall be final.