

HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS
PRENTICE SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURE

DEFINITIONS

Adequate Residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

Homeless Children and Youths 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, due to economic hardship, including children and youths 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
- are awaiting foster care placement
- 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
- are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting
- are migratory children and unaccompanied youth who are living in a situation described above
- are unaccompanied, which includes young people who have run away from home, been thrown out of their homes, and/or been abandoned by parents or guardians.

A child or youth shall be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

The Homeless Children and Youths Liaison is the staff person designated by the District as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act*. In the Prentice School District, the homeless liaison is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Coordinator.

Enroll and Enrollment means attending school and participating fully in school activities.

Fixed Residence is one that is stationary, permanent and not subject to change.

Immediate means without delay.

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

Permanently Housed means that the child has fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime housing.

Regular Residence is one which is used on a nightly basis.

School of Origin means that the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Unaccompanied Youth includes youth in homeless situations who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This may include young people who have run away from home, been thrown out of their homes, and/or been abandoned by parents or guardians. In all cases, the school district will obtain, and keep on file, a current emergency contact for each unaccompanied youth.

IDENTIFICATION

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the liaison will identify children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The 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 liaison. The 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 liaison. The liaison will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for the following District and school staff at least once each year: principals, assistant principals, federal program administrators, registrars, school secretaries, school counselors, school social workers, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, school nurses, substitutes, new staff as they are hired and teachers. 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.

The district liaison shall also obtain from every school the name and contact information for building level liaisons. Building liaisons will lead and coordinate their schools' compliance with this policy and will receive training from the district liaison annually.

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 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.

SCHOOL SELECTION

School of Origin

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that other students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and our school district. Students who change schools have been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. High mobility rates have also been shown to lower test scores for stable students. Keeping students in their schools of origin enhances their academic and social growth, while permitting our schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition shall 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 in transition 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 between academic years.

Feasibility shall be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth's wishes. Potential feasibility considerations include:

- Safety of the student
- Continuity of instruction
- Likely area of family or youth's future housing
- Time remaining in the academic year
- Anticipated length of stay in temporary living situation
- School placement of siblings
- Whether the student has special needs that would render the commute harmful

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin and services under federal and other programs, shall 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 selected for enrollment 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.

- 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.
- If necessary, the school must refer students to the 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 community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.

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

TRANSPORTATION

At the request of the parent or in the case of unaccompanied youth, the local agency liaison or designee, transportation will be provided for children and youth in transition to the school of origin, for the duration of homelessness. Once permanent housing is found, the student may stay in the school that they are attending, the school of origin, or attend the school where they have found housing until the end of the academic year. Once the student becomes permanently housed, it is at the district's discretion to assist the family with transportation needs.

The *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act* requires districts to provide transportation for preschool students comparable to transportation for any preschool student in the district.

SERVICES

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

- Transportation (as described above)
- Title I (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
- School nutrition programs
- Before and after-school programs
- Pre-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 shall be 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.

Attendance

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

Health Care Services

School personnel shall refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The liaison will assist the school in making such referrals, as necessary.

Parent Involvement

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 Board policy and these procedures must be provided in a form, manner, and language understandable to each parent.

SCHOOL SELECTION AND ENROLLMENT DISPUTES

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the child or youth in transition shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I services while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and shall immediately refer the parent or youth to the liaison. The liaison shall ensure the student is enrolled in the school of his/her choice, receiving other services to which he/she is entitled during the dispute resolution process, and shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible.

The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The liaison shall keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are repeatedly delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition.

The parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the liaison's decision, following complaint procedure, to the state Superintendent of Public Instruction in accordance with the state's dispute resolution process.

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

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend. The trauma and instability of homelessness put students at sufficient risk of academic regression to warrant additional support. **The district shall provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to children and youth in transition attending non-participating schools.** 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.

Title I funds may not be used to provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin. However once students who were homeless become permanently housed, districts may use Title I funds to pay for their transportation for the remainder of the school year.

The district's Title I plan will be coordinated with McKinney-Vento services, through collaboration between the Title I Coordinator and the liaison. Children and youth in transition shall be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education regulations and guidance.

COORDINATION

The liaison shall 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, 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 liaison and our schools in implementing this policy.