

Students Experiencing Homelessness: Enrollment Rights and Services

Purpose

This policy avers that Valley School District will provide equal access to a free, appropriate public education and related services to homeless students as practical and required by law.

Scope

This policy applies to the Superintendent, administrators, all district staff members, students, parents and guardians, and community members.

Policy

1. To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate public education (including public preschool education) provided to other students. Special attention will be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, the district will take reasonable steps to ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school on the basis of their homeless status.
 - 1.1. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, and school nutrition programs.
 - 1.2. Homeless students are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those who are:
 - (a) Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship, or a similar reason.
 - (b) Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
 - (c) Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
 - (d) Abandoned in hospitals.
 - (e) Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
 - (f) Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations, or similar settings.
 - (g) Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

2. DISTRICT LIAISON

The Superintendent or designee will designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's McKinney-Vento liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison may simultaneously serve as a coordinator for other Federal programs, provided that they are able to carry out the duties listed in the procedure that accompanies this policy.

- 2.1. The Superintendent or designee will encourage the homeless liaison to attend training on identifying and serving homeless children, and will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined by the state-level (OSPI) coordinator for homeless children and youth programs.
- 2.2. The district's liaison for homeless students and their families will coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.
 - 2.2.1. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens.
 - 2.2.2. The notice must be disseminated in a manner and form that parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth receiving such services can understand, including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in their native language.
 - 2.2.3. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

3. SCHOOL BUILDING POINT OF CONTACT

- 3.1. The principal of each elementary, middle, and high school building will establish a point of contact for homeless and unaccompanied youth. Unaccompanied youth are those students not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and include youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in section 1.2.
- 3.2. The school building point of contact is responsible for identifying homeless and unaccompanied youth and connecting them with the district's homeless student liaison. The district's homeless student liaison is responsible for training the building points of contact.

4. ENROLLMENT/BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION

- 4.1. Attendance options will be made available to homeless families on the same terms as families residing in the district, including attendance rights acquired by living in Valley School District attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra- and inter-district choice options.

- 4.2. In making a determination as to which school is in the homeless student's best interest to attend, the district will presume that it is in the student's best interest to remain enrolled in their school of origin unless such enrollment is against the wishes of a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
 - 4.3. If there is an enrollment dispute, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian will be informed of the district's decision and the reasons therefore (or will be informed if the student does not qualify for McKinney-Vento, if applicable), and their appeal rights in writing and in a language they can understand. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.
 - 4.4. Once the enrollment decision is made, the school will immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. However, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including academic records, medical records, proof of residency, mailing address or other documentation. Additionally, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to missed application deadlines or fees, fines or absences at a previous school.
 - 4.5. Records from the student's previous school will be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, and in compliance with the state's Address Confidentiality Program when necessary. However, the district cannot demand emergency contact information in a form or manner that creates a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.
 - 4.6. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student will be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist.
5. Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his/her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.
- 6. FACILITATING ON-TIME GRADE LEVEL PROGRESSION**
- 6.1. The district will waive specific courses required for graduation for students experiencing homelessness if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district or provide reasonable justification for denial of the waiver. In the event the district denies a waiver and the student would have qualified to graduate from their sending school district, the district will provide an alternative process of obtaining required coursework so that the student may graduate on time.

- 6.2. The district will consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and will provide students experiencing homelessness with opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.
- 6.3. For students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, the district will grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of the withdrawal or transfer. When the district receives a transfer student in these circumstances, it will accept the student's partial credits, apply them to the student's academic progress, graduation, or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the district.
- 6.4. In the event a student is transferring at the beginning of or during their junior or senior year of high school and is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, the district will work with the sending district to ensure the awarding of a diploma from the sending district if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.
- 6.5. In the event a student enrolled in three or more school districts as a high school student, has met state requirements, has transferred to the district, but is ineligible to graduate from the district after all alternatives have been considered, the district will waive its local requirements and ensure that the student receives a diploma.

7. INFORMED CONSENT FOR HEALTHCARE

- 7.1. Informed consent for healthcare on behalf of a student experiencing homelessness may be obtained from a school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison when:
 - (a) Consent is necessary for non-emergency, outpatient, primary care services, including physical examinations, vision examinations and eyeglasses, dental examinations, hearing examinations and hearing aids, immunizations, treatments for illnesses and conditions, and routine follow-up care customarily provided by a health care provider in an outpatient setting, excluding elective surgeries.
 - (b) The student meets the definition of a "homeless child or youth" under the federal McKinney-Vento homeless education assistance improvements act of 2001.
 - (c) The student is not under the supervision or control of a parent, custodian, or legal guardian, and is not in the care and custody of the department of social and health services.
- 7.2. Upon the request by a health care facility or a health care provider, a district employee authorized to consent to care must provide to the person rendering care a signed and dated declaration stating under penalty of perjury that the employee is a school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison and that the minor patient meet the requirements of RCW 7.70.065 (2) (b) listed above in this policy.

- 7.3. The district and district employee authorized to consent to care under this policy are not subject to administrative sanctions or civil damages resulting from the consent or non-consent for care or payment for care. Any declaration required by a health care facility or a health care provider described in the above paragraph must include written notice that the district employee is exempt from administrative sanctions and civil liability resulting from the consent or non-consent for care or payment for care.
8. The Superintendent or designee will ensure that materials provided to all students at the beginning of the school year or upon enrollment includes information about services and support for homeless students, and encourage the use of a variety of communications to notify students and families about services and support available to them if they experience homelessness (such as distributing and collecting a universal housing survey, providing state brochures and posting information on the district's website).
9. The Superintendent or designee will strongly encourage all district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers, to annually review the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) training video concerning the identification of student homelessness, and develop procedures to guide staff in serving homeless students and families, including dispute resolution and other processes recommended by OSPI.

Related Procedures

3115P1-Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

Policy Cross References

3110-Qualifications of Attendance

3116-Students in Out-of-Home (Foster) Care

3120-Enrollment

3140-Release of Resident Students

3141-Nonresident Students

3231-Student Records

3411-Student Immunization

Policy Legal References

RCW 28A.225.215 – Enrollment of children without legal residences

RCW 28A.320.145 – Support for homeless students

RCW 28A.320.142 – Unaccompanied and homeless youth—Building point of contact—Duty of district liaison for students experiencing homelessness

RCW 7.70.065 – Informed consent—Persons authorized to provide for patients who are not competent—Priority

Chapter 28A.320 RCW – Provisions applicable to all districts (new section created by 3SHB 1682, 2016 legislative action)

20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
Laws of 2018, ch. 271 – School Meals

Management Resources

Policy & Legal News, July 2019 – Hypermobility and Enrollment

Policy & Legal News, May 2018 – Student Nutrition Services

Policy & Legal News, October 2017 – Clarifying what is required and optional

Policy & Legal News, July 2017 – Updated policies for student who are homeless or in foster care

Policy & Legal News, November 2016 – ESSA ushers in new supports for homeless students

Policy & Legal News, December 2014 – New law requires added identification and support for homeless students

Policy News, October 2004 – Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services Update

Policy News, October 2002 – NCLB Addresses Homeless Students

Policy History

Action:	Date:
Approved by the Board	June 15, 2005
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