

Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. 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.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including those students who are:

- A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- 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. Awaiting foster care placement;
- F. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- G. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
- H. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The superintendent will designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's liaison for homeless students and their families.

According to the child's or youth's best interest, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area the student is actually living.

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

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 their appeal rights in writing. 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.

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. 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. 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, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. However, emergency contact information cannot be demanded in a form or manner that creates a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

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 or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

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. 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. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

The superintendent will:

- Strongly encourage district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers to annually review the video posted on the OSPI website on identification of student homelessness;
- Strongly encourage every district-designated homeless student liaison to attend trainings provided by the state on identification and serving homeless youth. Ensure that the district includes in materials provided to all students at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment, information about services and support for homeless students (i.e., the brochure posted on the OSPI website).
- Use a variety of communications each year to notify students and families about services and support available to them if they experience homelessness (e.g., distributing and collecting an annual housing intake survey, providing parent brochures directly to students and families, announcing the information at school-wide assemblies, posting information on the district's website).

Cross References: 3120 - Enrollment
3231 - Student Records
3413 - Student Immunization And Life Threatening Health Conditions

Legal References: RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences
RCW 28A.320.145 Support for homeless students
20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. No Child Left Behind Act
42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

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Resources

Posters and Other Materials for Community Outreach - OSPI

Policy News, October 2002 NCLB Addresses Homeless Students

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

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Tonasket School District
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