Series 5000: Students, Curriculum, and Academic Matters

5300 Student Enrollment, Attendance, and Records

5307 Homeless Students

A. General Policy

The District will provide a free public education to homeless children and youth who are in the District and afford them the educational rights and legal protections provided by federal and state law. Homeless children and youth will not be stigmatized or segregated based on their homeless status and will have the same access to services offered to students who are not homeless. It is the intent of this Policy to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students in the District.

B. Homeless Liaison

The homeless liaison will coordinate services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed. The liaison will also coordinate and collaborate with state homeless coordinators, community agencies, and District personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth, including unaccompanied youth. A student or Parent in a homeless situation who requires assistance should contact the District's homeless liaison:

Lisa Haag, Director Of Student Services / Homeless Liaison
(517) 547-6984
Lisa.Haag@Addisonschool.Us

The liaison's responsibilities include ensuring that:

1. homeless children and youth are identified by District personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;

2. homeless children and youth are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the District's schools;

3. homeless families and homeless children and youth have access to and receive educational services for which the families and students are eligible, including Head Start, early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other preschool programs administered by the District;

4. homeless families and students receive referrals to health care, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;

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5. Parents of homeless children and youth, and unaccompanied youth, are informed of available educational and related opportunities and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate;

6. public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth is disseminated in locations frequented by Parents of homeless children and youth, and unaccompanied youth, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the Parents of homeless children and youth, and unaccompanied youth;

7. enrollment disputes involving homeless children and youth are resolved as quickly as possible after receiving notice of the dispute and in accordance with any applicable state or District procedures;

8. Parents of homeless children and youth, and unaccompanied youth, are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected;

9. District personnel providing services to homeless children and youth receive professional development and other support to assist in meeting the educational and related needs of homeless students;

10. unaccompanied youths who are enrolled in school have: (a) opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as children and youth who are not homeless; (b) appropriate secondary education and support services, including receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school; (c) access to counselor services and supports to prepare for and improve college readiness; and (d) notice of their status as independent students under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that they may obtain assistance from the liaison to receive verification of that status for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) purposes; and

11. performance of any other duties identified in this Policy and applicable federal laws or state guidelines governing the homeless liaison's duties.

The homeless liaison will participate in relevant professional development and other technical assistance activities as part of the liaison's duties and may work with other District personnel to accomplish the responsibilities described in this Policy.

C. Definitions

1. "Homeless children and youth" means persons who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who:

   a. are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or

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camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;

b. have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

c. are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

d. are migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

2. "Child" and "youth" refers to persons who, if they were children of residents of the District, would be entitled to a free education.

3. The term "unaccompanied youth" means a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a Parent.

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

D. District's Obligation

In the best interest of a homeless child or youth, the District generally will:

1. continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year and for the remainder of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or

2. enroll the child or youth in any public school that students who are not homeless who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

E. School Stability

In determining the best interest of a homeless student, the District will presume that keeping a homeless child or youth in the student's school of origin is in the student's best interest unless it is contrary to the request of the student's Parent, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth. In determining the school placement of a homeless child or youth, the District will also consider factors related to the impact of mobility on the homeless child or youth's achievement, education, health, and safety, giving priority to the Parent's or the unaccompanied youth's request. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the District will assist in placement or enrollment decisions and will give priority to the unaccompanied youth's views.

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If, after consideration of the presumption and factors above, the District determines that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the Parent or unaccompanied youth, the District will provide written explanation of the reasons for its determination in a manner and form understandable to the Parent or unaccompanied youth, including information about the right to appeal.

F. Immediate Enrollment

The District will immediately enroll homeless children and youth, including unaccompanied youth, even if they are unable to produce records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, immunization records, residency documents, birth certificates, or other documentation or the child or youth has missed application or enrollment deadlines. The District will immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic and other records. The District's homeless liaison will assist in obtaining any necessary immunizations or screenings or immunization or other required health records.

G. Comparable Services

The District will provide homeless children and youth services that are comparable to those offered to students who are not homeless, including transportation services, Title I services, programs and services for students with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504, career and technical education, programs for gifted and talented students, programs for English learners, and school nutrition programs.

H. Transportation

Transportation will be provided to homeless students to the extent required by law and will be comparable to that provided to students who are not homeless. At the request of the Parent (or for an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin as follows:

1. If the homeless child or youth continues to live in the area served by the District, the child's or youth's transportation to and from the school of origin will be provided or arranged by the District.

2. If the homeless child's or youth's living arrangements in the area served by the District terminate and the child or youth begins living in an area served by another school district, the District and the other school district in which the homeless child or youth is living must agree on a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the homeless student with transportation to and from the District. If the districts are unable to agree, the responsibility and cost for transportation will be shared equally.

I. Records

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The District will maintain and respond to requests for enrollment records for homeless children or youth consistent with Policy 5309 and state and federal record laws. Any information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation will be treated as a confidential education record and not directory information.

J. Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises about a homeless student's eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, the homeless student, including an unaccompanied youth, must be immediately enrolled and served in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute.

A complainant should contact the District's homeless liaison who will follow MDE-approved District dispute resolution processes or MDE dispute resolution/complaint procedures to quickly resolve the dispute.

Legal authority: 42 USC 11431 et seq.

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