

**Students Experiencing Homelessness**

**Enrollment Rights and Services**

A. Definitions:

1. **Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness** means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, parks, or campgrounds; or children or youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation by human beings; or children or youth living in cars, abandoned buildings or substandard housing or similar situations; or migratory children living in circumstances like those described above.
2. **Unaccompanied Youth** means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act.
3. **School of origin** means the school or preschool that a child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. When a child or youth completes the final grade-level served by the school of origin, the school of origin includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.
4. **Best interest determination** means that the district must make school placement decisions for students and youths experiencing homelessness on the basis of their best interest, as determined by student-centered factors including impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety. Priority should be given to the request of the child or the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth. Placement of siblings should also be considered.
5. **Excess cost of transportation** means the difference between what the district normally spends to transport a student to school and the cost of transporting a student experiencing homelessness to school. For example, there is no excess cost of transportation if the district provides transportation to a student experiencing homelessness by a regular bus route. However, if the district provides special transportation to a student experiencing homelessness that is not part of a regular bus route and not covered by the state transportation funding formula (e.g., summer school transportation, extracurricular activities, etc.), the entire cost would be considered excess costs of transportation. The additional cost of the district’s re-routing of busses to transport a student experiencing homelessness can be considered excess cost of transportation. The district may use McKinney-Vento subgrant funds and Title I, Part A funds to defray the excess cost of transportation for students experiencing homelessness. If the district has McKinney Vento subgrant or sufficient Title I Part A funds available, rides can be arranged for McKinney Vento identified students for extracurricular activities or any other activity that takes place on district property (example: Boys and Girls Club involvement).

B. Identification

The district will:

- 39 1. Use a housing questionnaire in its enrollment process. The questionnaire will be distrib-  
40 uted universally so as to avoid stigmatizing children and youths and their families experi-  
41 encing homelessness;  
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- 43 2. Ensure that referral forms used to identify and support students experiencing homeless-  
44 ness are accessible and easy to use;  
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- 46 3. Include its homeless liaison’s contact information on its website;  
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- 48 4. Provide materials for students experiencing homelessness and parents, if necessary and to  
49 the extent feasible, in their native language;  
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- 51 5. As practicable, provide annual guidance for school staff on the definition of homeless-  
52 ness, signs of homelessness, the impact of homelessness on students and steps to take  
53 when a potentially homeless student is identified, including how to connect the student  
54 with appropriate housing and support service providers;  
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- 56 6. Develop interagency partnerships to serve families and youths experiencing homeless-  
57 ness; and  
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- 59 7. Work with the state homelessness coordinator to facilitate services to families and youths  
60 made homeless by natural disasters or other catastrophic events.  
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62 **C. Placement and enrollment:**

63 The district shall:

- 64 1. When deciding placement, presume that allowing the student experiencing homelessness  
65 to remain in their school of origin is in the student’s best interest, except when doing so is  
66 contrary to the request of the student’s parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth;
- 67 2. If the parent/guardian contests the district’s decision, make a best interest determination  
68 based on factors such as the impact of mobility on the student’s educational achievement,  
69 health and safety. If the best interest determination is requested by an unaccompanied  
70 youth, the process will give priority to the views of the youth;
- 71 3. After conducting a best interest determination, provide to the parent/guardian of the stu-  
72 dent in a timely manner and in a language they can understand, a written explanation of  
73 the final decision and the right to appeal the decision (see Dispute Resolution Procedure,  
74 below);
- 75 4. Pending resolution of disputes that arise over eligibility, school selection or enrollment,  
76 immediately enroll a student experiencing homelessness in the school in which the par-  
77 ent, guardian or unaccompanied youth seeks enrollment;
- 78 5. Avoid delay or denial of enrollment of students experiencing homelessness, even if they  
79 have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness or are  
80 unable to produce records required for enrollment (e.g., previous academic records, im-  
81 munization records, health records, proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certifi-  
82 cates);
- 83 6. Avoid requirements for student contact information to be in a form or manner that con-  
84 structs a barrier for homeless students.

- 85 7. Provide transportation for students experiencing homelessness to their school or pre-  
86 school of origin. Once the student has obtained permanent housing, the district will con-  
87 tinue to provide such transportation until the end of the academic year. If the student ex-  
88 perienceing homelessness remains in their school of origin but begins living in an area  
89 served by district, the district of origin and the district in which the student experiencing  
90 homelessness is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs  
91 for the student's transportation to and from their school of origin. If the districts cannot  
92 reach agreement, the responsibility and costs for transportation will be shared equally;
- 93 8. Continue to provide transportation to their school of origin pending the outcome of en-  
94 rollment or transportation disputes;
- 95 9. Immediately contact the school last attended by the students experiencing homelessness  
96 to obtain relevant academic and other records;
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98 **D. District's homeless liaison**

99 The district liaison shall ensure that:

- 100 a. Children and youths experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel and  
101 through coordination of activities with other entities and agencies
- 102 b. Children and youths experiencing homelessness enroll and have a full and equal opportunity  
103 to succeed in school;
- 104 c. Families, children and youths experiencing homelessness receive educational services for  
105 which such families, children and youths are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start  
106 programs, preschool programs administered by the district and referrals to health care ser-  
107 vices, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;
- 108 d. Students experiencing homelessness are identified and provided proper access to free school  
109 meals.
- 110 e. The parents or guardians of children experiencing homelessness and youths are informed of  
111 the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with  
112 meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- 113 f. Public notice of the educational rights of children and youths experiencing homelessness is  
114 disseminated where such children receive services (e.g., schools, family shelters, soup kitch-  
115 ens);
- 116 g. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with Paragraph C, Placement and enrollment,  
117 above; and
- 118 h. The parents or guardians of a child or youth experiencing homelessness, and any unaccompa-  
119 nied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the  
120 school of origin and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected;
- 121 i. Unaccompanied youths enrolled in school have opportunities to meet the same challenging  
122 state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youths, are informed  
123 of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
124 (HEA) (20 U.S.C. 1087vv) for federal student aid purposes, and their right to receive verifi-  
125 cation of this status from the local liaison;
- 126 j. Barriers that prevent students experiencing homelessness from receiving credit for full or par-  
127 tial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school are identified and re-  
128 moved;

- 129 k. Affirm whether students experiencing homelessness meet the U.S. Department of Housing  
130 and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to qualify them for HUD home-  
131 less assistance programs and refer families and students experiencing homelessness to hous-  
132 ing and other services;
- 133 l. Assist parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth in obtaining immunizations, health  
134 screenings, guardianship records and other documents normally required for enrollment; and
- 135 m. Assist unaccompanied youths in connecting with needed supports such as housing assistance,  
136 health care and other services.

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138 In addition to the duties and responsibilities listed above, the district liaison will work to improve systems  
139 to identify students experiencing homelessness and coordinate with the district’s nutrition program to en-  
140 sure that each student experiencing homelessness has proper access to free school meals, and that applica-  
141 ble accountability and reporting requirements are satisfied.

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143 The district shall inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with families experi-  
144 encing homelessness of the duties of the district homeless liaison.

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146 **E. Dispute Resolution Procedure**

147 The District shall ensure that the child/youth attends the school in which they sought enrollment while  
148 the dispute process is being carried out.

149 **1. Notification of Appeal Process**

150 If the district seeks to place a child experiencing homelessness in a school other than the school  
151 of origin or the school requested by the parent, the school district shall inform the parent or the  
152 unaccompanied youth of the right to appeal. The district shall provide the parent or unaccompa-  
153 nied youth with written notice including:

- 154 a. An explanation of the decision regarding the child’s placement, and contact information for  
155 the district and OSPI homeless liaison, including their roles;
- 156 b. Notification of the parent’s right to appeal(s);
- 157 c. Notification of the right to enroll in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute;
- 158 d. A description of the dispute resolution process including a petition form that can be returned  
159 to the school to initiate the process and timelines; and
- 160 e. A summary of the federal legislation governing placement of homeless students (McKinney-  
161 Vento Act).

162 **2. Appeal to the School District Liaison – Level I**

163 If the parent or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the district’s placement decision, they may  
164 appeal by filing a written request for dispute resolution with the school, the district’s homeless  
165 liaison or a designee. If submitted to the school, it will be immediately forwarded to the home-  
166 less liaison. The request for dispute resolution must be submitted within fifteen business days of  
167 receiving notification of the district’s placement.

168 The liaison must log the complaint including a brief description of the situation and reason for the  
169 dispute and the date and time the complaint was filed.

- 170 a. A copy of the complaint must be forwarded to the liaison’s supervisor and the Superinten-  
171 dent.
- 172 b. Within five business days of receiving the complaint, the liaison must provide the parent or  
173 unaccompanied youth with a written decision and notification of the parent’s right to appeal.
- 174 c. The district will verify receipt of the Level I decision;
- 175 d. If the parent or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal, notification must be provided to the  
176 district liaison within ten business days of receipt of the Level I decision. The liaison shall  
177 provide the parent with an appeals package containing:  
178 1. The complaint filed with the district liaison at Level I,  
179 2. The decision rendered at Level 1; and  
180 3. Additional information provided by the parent, unaccompanied youth and/or homeless  
181 liaison.

**3. Appeal to the School Superintendent – Level II**

182 The parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the district liaison’s decision to the Superinten-  
183 dent or the Superintendent’s designee using the appeals package provided at Level I.

- 185 a. The Superintendent will arrange for a personal conference to be held with the parent or unac-  
186 companied youth within five business days of receiving the Level I appeals package; This  
187 meeting may be held over video or phone conference if required due to a school building clo-  
188 sure or if the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth is unable to attend in-person, provided  
189 the same opportunity for appeal is given and the same rights are provided to the family or  
190 youth.
- 191 b. Within five business days of the conference with the parent or unaccompanied youth the Su-  
192 perintendent shall provide that individual with a written decision with supporting evidence  
193 and notification of the parent’s right to appeal to OSPI.
- 194 c. The district will verify receipt of the Level II decision.
- 195 d. A copy of the Superintendent’s decision will be forwarded to the district’s homeless liaison.
- 196 e. If the parent or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal to the OSPI, notification must be pro-  
197 vided to the district homeless liaison within ten business days of receipt of the Level II deci-  
198 sion.

**4. Appeal to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction – Level III**

- 200 a. The district superintendent shall forward a copy of the Level II decision and all written docu-  
201 mentation to the OSPI homeless liaison within five days of rendering a decision. The district  
202 shall submit the entire dispute package to the OSPI in one complete package by U.S. mail.
- 203 b. The OSPI’s homeless education coordinator or designee, along with the appropriate agency  
204 director, and/or agency assistant superintendent shall make a final decision within fifteen  
205 business days of receiving the appeal;
- 206 c. The OSPI’s decision will be forwarded to the district’s homeless liaison. The liaison will dis-  
207 tribute the decision to the parent or unaccompanied youth and the local superintendent.
- 208 d. The OSPI’s decision will be the final resolution for placement of a homeless child or youth in  
209 the district.
- 210 e. The district will retain the record of all disputes, at each level, related to the placement of  
211 homeless children.

**F. Inter-District Disputes**

212 If districts are unable to resolve a dispute regarding the placement of a student experiencing home-  
213 lessness, either district may submit a written request to the OSPI seeking resolution.  
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215 The OSPI will resolve the dispute within 10 business days of notification of the dispute and inform  
216 all interested parties of the decision.

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