

## **FAMILIES IN TRANSITION: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES**

To the extent practical and as required by law, the Richland School District (“the District”) will work with students in transition and their families to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate education (including public preschool education) provided to other students. Special attention will be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of students in transition not currently attending school, as well as mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, the District will take reasonable steps to ensure that students in transition are not stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school.

Students in transition 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.

### **Definitions**

1. **Students in transition** 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, substandard housing or similar situations; or migratory children living in circumstances like those described above. “Substandard housing” may be determined by considering factors such as whether the setting in which the child or youth is living lacks water, electricity, or heat; is infested with vermin or mold; lacks a working kitchen or toilet, or presents unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities. Cities, counties and states have varying housing codes that further define housing deemed substandard by law.
2. **Unaccompanied youth** means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and includes 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 in transition and youths 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 students in transition to school. For example, there is no excess cost of transportation if the District provides transportation to students in transition by a regular bus route. However, if the District provides special transportation to students in transition (e.g., by private vehicle or transportation company), the entire cost would be considered excess costs of transportation. The additional cost of the District's re-routing of busses to transport students in transition can be considered excess cost of transportation. The District may use McKinney-Vento subgrant funds and Title I, Part A funds to defray excess cost of transportation for students in transition.

The Superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the District's liaisons for families in transition.

### **Best Interest Determination**

According to the child's or youth's best interest, students in transition will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain in transition 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 students in transition may request enrollment in the school in which attendance area the student is actually living. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to families in transition on the same terms as families resident in the District.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the District's decision and their appeal rights in writing 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.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall 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, fees, fines, or absences at a previous school.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall 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 liaisons are directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall 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 constructs a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

Students in transition 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 student in transition 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 families in transition liaisons shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to students in transition 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 students in transition where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. 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. The District's liaisons will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of students in transition 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.

The Superintendent or their designee will:

- Strongly encourage district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers to annually review the video posted on the OSPI website on identification of students in transition;
- Strongly encourage every district-designated students in transition 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 students in transition (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 a universal 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).

### **Facilitating on-time grade level progression**

The District will: 1) waive specific courses required for graduation for students experiencing homelessness if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district; or 2) 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

At each middle school and high school, the principal or their designee will be the point of contact for such youth. The 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.

Legal References:	WAC 180-38-045	School attendance conditioned upon presentation of proofs
	RCW 28A.210.320	Children with life threatening health conditions
	RCW 28A.210.080	Attendance conditional on presentation of immunization records
	RCW 28A.225.215	Enrollment of children without legal residences
	Title I, Part C	No Child Left Behind Act, 2002
	42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.	McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

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