Special Definitions and Procedures Applicable to
Homeless Children and Youth

The *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* (the "Act") applies to all children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, such as a children living in homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, runaway and homeless youth shelters, transitional living facilities, cars, campgrounds, motels or children and youth living doubled up, and homeless and migratory children.

The Act provides that homeless children and youth:

- do not need a permanent address to enroll in school;
- have a choice of school placement;
- cannot be denied school enrollment because school records or other enrollment documentation are not immediately available;
- have the right to participate in all federal, state, or local programs and activities for which they are eligible;
- cannot be isolated or separated from the mainstream school environment; and
- have the right to receive prompt resolution of any dispute regarding educational placement.

Therefore, in accordance with the Act, the district shall make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their education that may exist. The district will not stigmatize or segregate homeless students and youth, and these students shall have access to the same public school programs available to other students of the district. The district will identify and provide equal access to secondary education and support systems for homeless students, runaway youths and youths separated from public schools. The district will also work to identify and remove those barriers which prevent youths from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.

Definitions

For purposes of the Act, and this policy, "homeless children and youth" means students who lack fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and includes:

1. children and youths who 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 camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or abandoned in hospitals;

2. children and youth who 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;

3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

4. migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless.

Programs, Activities, and Social Services

The district will provide each homeless student or youth those programs, activities, and social services available to other district students which are determined to be in the student's best interests. The programs, activities, and services include the following:

- Preschool;
- Special education;
- Title I;
- Limited English Proficiency;
- Before and after school care;
- Academic and extracurricular activities;
- Magnet schools;
- Summer school;
- Career and technology education;
- Advanced placement;
- Online learning;
- Charter school;
- School meals; and
- Transportation.

The district will waive those fees which may present a barrier for homeless students or youths, including those associated with the school meal programs and transportation.

Enrollment, Records, and Immunizations

The Act provides that homeless children and youth, individually or through a parent or guardian, may choose to attend the school in the area in which they are currently living. The district's residency officer will determine whether a student is a homeless child or youth for purposes of establishing residency and promptly advise the parent, guardian or person having legal custody of the child of the decision, both orally and in writing, if possible. If there is no such person, the residency officer will advise the student. Whenever possible, the district will comply with the wishes of either the parent, guardian, person having legal custody of the child, or student regarding enrollment. The district will enroll each homeless student and permit his or her full participation in all school programs, whether or not the student is accompanied by a parent, guardian or person having custody of the child, and without proof of residence, current immunizations and traditional enrollment documentation, such as school records and medical/immunization records. The district's homeless liaison may assist the student and school in obtaining those items. A parent, guardian or person having legal custody of the child who disagrees with the residency officer's determination may appeal the decision to the board of education under the procedure identified in this policy. If there is no parent, guardian or person having legal custody of the child available, the student may appeal the decision.

Appeals Procedures

The district will make every effort to resolve disputes regarding homeless children at the lowest level possible by utilizing the following process:

1. At the time a homeless student seeks enrollment, the district will notify the student or his/her family of these procedures and provide the student/family with a copy of this policy.

2. The district will promptly notify the district's homeless coordinator that a homeless student seeks enrollment, and will seek to involve the coordinator in decisions regarding the student's education.

3. Students/families who disagree with a decision regarding the student's education may meet with the coordinator for an informal resolution. The coordinator will notify the student/family that a written complaint may be submitted within five (5) days (or longer if agreed upon by the parties).

4. If the coordinator receives a written complaint, the coordinator will prepare a decision (plan of action) and provide it to the student/family within five (5) days of receipt of the written complaint. The coordinator will also notify the student/family of the right to appeal to the superintendent.

5. Students/families who are still dissatisfied with a decision regarding the student's education may file a written appeal with the superintendent within five (5) days of receipt of the coordinator's plan. The superintendent will meet with the student/family within five (5) days of receipt of the appeal. The superintendent will issue a decision within five (5) days of the meeting with the student/family. The superintendent will also notify the student/family of the right to appeal to the board of education.

7. Students/families who are still dissatisfied with a decision regarding the student's education may file a written appeal with the board of education by submitting a written notice to the superintendent within five (5) days of the superintendent's decision. The appeal will be placed on the next agenda (or the following agenda, if the appeal is received after the agenda posting deadline) and the board's decision is final at the district level. Students/families who are still dissatisfied with a decision regarding the student's education may file an appeal with the Oklahoma State Department of Education utilizing the procedures established by the OSDE.