**Sharon-Mutual Homeless/In-Transition Policy**

Homelessness exists in our community. A combination of high housing costs and poverty causes

many families to lose their housing. Many young people leave their homes due to abuse, neglect,

and family conflict. Children and youth who have lost their housing live in a variety of places,

including motels, shelters, shared residences, transitional housing programs, cars, campgrounds,

and others. Their lack of permanent housing can lead to potentially serious physical, emotional,

and mental consequences. This school district will ensure that all children and youth receive a free

appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools.

This district will also follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

It is the policy of our district to view children as individuals. Therefore, this policy will not refer

to children as homeless; it will instead use the term children and youth in transition. Under

federal law, children and youth in transition must have access to appropriate public education,

including preschool, and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement

standards. They must be included in state- and district-wide assessments and accountability

systems. Our schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination,

segregation, and harassment.

Information regarding this policy will be distributed to all students upon enrollment and once

during the school year, provided to students who seek to withdraw from school, and posted in

every school in the district, as well as other places where children, youth, and families in transition

receive services, including family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in

centers, welfare departments, health departments, and other social service agencies.

**Definitions**

Children and youth in transition means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to

or eligible for a free public education, including preschool, and who lack a fixed, regular, and

adequate nighttime residence, including:

■ Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing,

economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, campgrounds, or trailer parks

due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional

shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.

■ Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not

designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

■ Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard

housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.

■ Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth will be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation

described above.

*Unaccompanied youth* means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in

transition as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.

*Enroll* and *enrollment* mean attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

*Immediate* means without delay.

*Parent* means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

*School of origin* means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the

school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

*Local liaison* is the staff person designated by our LEA and each LEA in the state as the person

responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the local homeless education liaison by the

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

**Identification**

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison will identify

children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The local liaison will train

school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and

youth as in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the

local liaison. The local liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to inquire about

possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward

information indicating homelessness to the local liaison. Community partners in identification may

include the following: family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in

centers, welfare departments and other social service agencies, street outreach teams, faith-based

organizations, truancy and attendance officers, local homeless coalitions, and legal services.

The local liaison will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district;

where they are living; their academic achievement (including performance on state- and districtwide

assessments); and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education, or

school transfers.

**School Selection**

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend

any school that housed students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is

actually living are eligible to attend. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important

for both the student and our school district. Students who change schools have been found to have

lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. High

mobility rates also have been shown to lower test scores for stable students. Keeping students in

their schools of origin enhances their academic and social growth, while permitting our schools to

benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent or youth’s wishes. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years.

Feasibility will be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular

student and the parent or youth’s wishes. Potential feasibility considerations include:

■ The age of the child or youth

■ The distance of a commute and the impact it may have on the student’s education

■ Personal safety issues

■ A student’s need for special instruction (e.g., special education and related services)

■ The length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location

■ The time remaining in the school year

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of

origin (see next page) and services under federal and other programs, will not be considered in

determining feasibility.

**Enrollment**

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of

homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have school enrollment documents

available readily. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment must enroll any child or youth in

transition immediately. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document

normally required for enrollment, including:

■ Proof of residency

■ Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student’s previous school to

obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available

can be made based on the student’s age and information gathered from the student, parent, and

previous schools or teachers.)

■ Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, the school must

refer students to the local liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization

and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state

registries, and school- or community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.)

■ Proof of guardianship

■ Birth certificate

■ Any other document requirements

■ Unpaid school fees

■ Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes

■ Any factor related to the student’s living situation

Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll

themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or local liaison.

**Transportation**

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her

school of origin. To avoid such forced school transfers, at a parent’s request, transportation will

be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation will be

provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above,

including during pending disputes. The local liaison will request transportation to and from the

school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered only

in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the

student, as discussed above. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to

transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Schools and local liaisons will use the district transportation form to process transportation

requests. Requests will be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the student

in transition is living and attending school in this district, this district will arrange transportation.

If the student in transition is living in this district but attending school in another, or attending

school in this district but living in another, this district will coordinate with the neighboring district

to arrange transportation. It is this district’s policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a

student in transition missing school. If such a dispute arises, this district will arrange transportation

and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the State Coordinator for the Education of

Homeless Children and Youth. In addition to receiving transportation to and from the school of

origin upon request, children and youth in transition will also be provided with other transportation

services comparable to those offered to housed students.

**Services**

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other

students in the selected school, including:

■ Transportation (as described above)

■ Title I, Part A, services (as described below)

■ Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education

and related services and programs for English language learners

■ Vocational and technical education programs

■ Gifted and talented programs

■ Before- and after-school programs

The district recognizes that children and youth in transition suffer from disabilities at a

disproportionate rate, yet frequently are not evaluated or provided appropriate special education

and related services. To address this problem, evaluations of children and youth in transition

suspected of having a disability will be given priority and coordinated with students’ prior and

subsequent schools as necessary to ensure the timely completion of a full evaluation. When

necessary, the district will designate expeditiously a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth

suspected of having a disability. If participation of a surrogate parent in the student’s education

is needed prior to the appointment of a surrogate parent, the district will designate a temporary

surrogate in accordance with the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

(IDEA). If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school will

implement it immediately. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations will then be conducted

expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in

choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provision of

services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

When applying any district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence

related to a child or youth’s living situation will be excused. Our school district will follow state

procedures to ensure that youth in transition and youth who are out of school are identified

and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services. School

personnel will refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including

dental and mental health services. The local liaison will assist the school in making such referrals,

as necessary.

School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available

to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children’s

education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a

form, manner, and language understandable to each parent.

**Disputes**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be

admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the

dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written

explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer the parent or youth to the local

liaison immediately. The local liaison will ensure that the student is enrolled in the requested

school and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and will resolve the dispute as

expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth will be given every opportunity to

participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The local liaison will keep records of all

disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are delaying or denying the

enrollment of children and youth in transition repeatedly.

The parent, unaccompanied youth, or school district may appeal the school district’s decision as

provided in the state’s dispute resolution process.

**Free Meals**

Hunger and poor nutrition are obvious barriers to learning. To help ensure that children and youth

in transition are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all

children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth

in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student’s name to the district

nutrition office for immediate processing.

**Title I, Part A**

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless

of what school they attend. The trauma and instability of homelessness put students at sufficient

risk of academic regression to warrant additional support. The district will reserve such funds as

are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to children and

youth in transition attending non-participating schools. The amount reserved will be determined by

a formula based upon the per-pupil Title I, Part A, expenditure and developed jointly by the local

liaison and the Title I director. Reserved funds will be used to provide education-related support

services to children and youth in transition, both in school and outside of school, and to remove

barriers that prevent regular attendance.

Our district’s Title I plan will be coordinated with our McKinney-Vento services, through

collaboration between the Title I director and the local liaison. Children and youth in transition will

be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and

U.S. Department of Education Regulations and Policy Guidance.

**Training**

The local liaison will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for the following LEA and

school staff at least once each year: the Assistant Superintendent, principals, assistant principals,

federal program administrators, registrars, school secretaries, school counselors, school social

workers, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, school nurses, and teachers. The trainings

and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate

enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to children and youth in

transition.

The local liaison will also obtain from every school the name and contact information of a building

liaison. Building liaisons will lead and coordinate their schools’ compliance with this policy and will

receive training from the local liaison annually.

**Coordination**

The local liaison will coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education

of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing

and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, local liaisons in neighboring

districts, and other organizations and agencies. Coordination will include conducting outreach and

training to those agencies and participating in the local continuum of care, homeless coalition,

homeless steering committee, and other relevant groups. Both public and private agencies will be

encouraged to support the local liaison and our schools in implementing this policy.

**Preschool**

Preschool education is a very important element of later academic success. Children in transition

have experienced many difficulties accessing preschool opportunities. To facilitate preschool

enrollment and attendance, the provisions of this policy will apply to preschools administered by

our school district. Our district will ensure that children in transition receive priority enrollment in

preschool programs operated by the district, including exempting children in transition from waiting

lists.

Children in transition with disabilities will be referred for preschool services under the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Children in transition under age three will be referred for

at-risk services under Part C of IDEA and screened to determine if referrals for additional Part C

services are appropriate. The local liaison will collaborate with Head Start and Even Start programs

and other preschool programs to ensure that children in transition can access those programs.

**References**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§11431 – 11436.

Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§6311 – 6315.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§1400 et seq.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, 42 U.S.C. §§1751 et seq.

June 5, 1992 Policy of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services.