

Children Experiencing Homelessness and Unaccompanied Youth

Purpose

The Taylor County School District provides an educational environment that treats homeless students and unaccompanied youth with dignity and respect. Homeless students are provided with equal access to educational programs provided to other students, have an opportunity to meet state and district academic achievement standards to which all students are held, and are not segregated or discriminated against on the basis of their homeless status. They are entitled to participate fully in all programs and activities and benefit from services made available routinely to students not experiencing residential transition/instability or homelessness.

Eligibility

Under McKinney-Vento (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. ss11431-11436, sec. 25), homeless children and youth are defined as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence." The term includes children and youth who:

- a) are living with other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, including children and youth living doubled-up with family or friends;
- b) are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative, adequate accommodations;
- c) are living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- d) are abandoned in hospitals;
- f) have a primary night-time residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, bus or train stations of similar settings.
- g) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, and/or substandard housing.
- h) are migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Rights of Homeless Students

- a) Homeless children must be enrolled immediately in school. Unaccompanied youth who meet the homeless definition must also be immediately enrolled in school. Unaccompanied youth may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or district liaison/designee. If the youth is enrolled by an adult other than the parent or guardian, the adult will sign the school registration documents. The Homeless Liaison or his designee will work with the receiving school to facilitate registration.
- b) The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" are defined to mean receiving a school assignment, attending school and participating fully in school activities. The school selected for enrollment must immediately (within one school day) enroll any homeless child or youth. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment.
- c) The family has a choice to stay in the school of origin when practicable until the end of the school year, or attend the public school for which they are eligible where they are living. Out-of-district transportation services will be made available cooperatively between the TCSD and the school of origin (home school). In the event the commute is unreasonable or deemed not in the student's best interest, a decision will be made by the Homeless Liaison on a case-by-case basis and determined in the best interest of the student.
- d) Books and school supplies will be made available upon enrollment in such instances as textbooks are used.
- e) The student has the right to participate in all school-related activities, i.e. tutorial, instructional support, Community Learning Centers, etc. and extra-curricular activities in as far as the homeless student meets established eligibility requirements normally expected of students.
- f) The Homeless Liaison and school staff shall work with the student and his/her family to obtain information regarding how to get fee waivers, free uniforms, and referrals to low-cost or free medical services.
- g) Homeless children have the right to participate fully in school programs including all regular academic programs, extracurricular activities, access to special services (services for ELs, identification and education of students with disabilities SWDs, migrant education, before and after school tutoring) and any other program which might normally and customarily be made available to any other student in the system not experiencing a residential transition.
- h) Homeless students shall be eligible for credit on their transcript for all work completed, including courses not completed as well as courses completed (partial credit). Credit will be granted for all successful work in increments of nine-week periods. Credit by examination will be granted when appropriate and when approved by the Homeless Liaison and school principal.

Dispute

Disputes regarding eligibility for McKinney-Vento services or transportation to and from the school of origin are handled on the system level. Contact the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison in the event of a dispute to begin the dispute process. If a satisfactory resolution of a dispute regarding homeless children or unaccompanied youth is not reached on the local level, an appeal process is spelled-out in the system McKinney-Vento Policy Manual and the parent may appeal the local decision to the Georgia State Department of Education Homeless Division for review.

For more information or to make a referral of a homeless child/unaccompanied youth:

LaTonja H. Turner, TCSD Homeless

Liaison

478-862-5224 ext. 1037

478-391-1454 cell

turner.latonja@taylorboe.org