

SM001 – HOMELESS STUDENT EDUCATION

Policy Issue Date: 7/1/2018

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POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is to clarify statutory rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness as provided by federal and state law. Together with other public education agencies in our community, FLVS Full Time will ensure that all homeless children and youth receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools. FLVS Full Time will also follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act for students and families who wish to enroll in their public school of choice. Under federal law, homeless children and youth must have access to appropriate public education and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in statewide and district-wide assessments and accountability systems and be free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment.

Definitions

The McKinney-Vento Act defines *homeless children and youth* as children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Are abandoned in hospitals.
- 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.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines the term *unaccompanied youth* to include a youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines the term *school of origin* to mean the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school where the child or youth was last enrolled.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines the term *enroll and enrollment* to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

The term *immediate* means without delay.

The term *parent* means the natural or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a student.

The term *liaison* is the staff person designated by the school leadership as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Act.

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LIAISON

The FLVS Full Time school liaisons shall be the school principals or their designee.

SCHOOL ADVOCATE(S)

The school advocates shall be the school counselor(s).

IDENTIFICATION

The liaison, in collaboration with the FLVS Full Time enrollment team, school advocates, and school personnel, will identify homeless children who seek enrollment in our schools. The liaison will train the school advocates and school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. FLVS Full Time will utilize the enrollment document on Student Residency Declaration form to identify homeless students.

The liaison will maintain data on the number of homeless children and youth in school, where they are living, their academic achievement (including performance on statewide and district-wide assessments), and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education, or school transfers.

SCHOOL SELECTION

Each homeless child and youth has the right to remain at his/her school of origin or to attend any school in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living. Feasibility of enrollment in our school shall be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and best interests of the particular student and the wishes of the parent or youth. Potential feasibility considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Safety of the student
- Continuity of instruction
- Likely area of family or youth's future housing
- Time remaining in the academic year
- Anticipated length of stay in temporary living situation
- School placement of siblings

Services that are required to be provided, including services under federal and other programs, shall not be considered in determining feasibility of enrollment.

If enrollment of a homeless child in FLVS Full Time is determined not to be feasible, FLVS Full Time will use the attached Written Notification of Enrollment Decision form to communicate this decision to parents and other relevant parties.

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ENROLLMENT

Homeless students may not have school enrollment documents readily available. Nonetheless, FLVS Full Time, if selected for enrollment and determined feasible for a homeless child, must immediately enroll the homeless child. 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 Homeless 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
- Any factor related to the student's living situation

The assigned school's counselor and the Enrollment team shall assist the family and contact the previously attended school system to obtain the required records. The assigned school's staff person shall assist the parent or guardian in obtaining necessary immunizations or immunization or medical records if the student needs to obtain these records.

SERVICES

Homeless children shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in our school, including:

- Title I (as described below)
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners

FLVS Full Time recognizes that homeless children may suffer from disabilities, but may not have been evaluated for such or may lack documentation regarding prior evaluation, including a copy of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). To address this problem, evaluations of homeless children suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with a student's prior and subsequent schools as necessary to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation. If a student has an Individualized Education Program, the school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall 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.

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DISPUTES

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the homeless child shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall also have the rights of a homeless student to all appropriate educational services while the dispute is pending. The liaison shall ensure the student is enrolled in the school and receiving other services to which he/she is entitled and shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The liaison shall keep records of all disputes. The parent may appeal the liaison's decision as provided in the state's dispute resolution process.

TITLE I

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I services. The trauma and instability of homelessness put students at sufficient risk of academic regression to warrant additional support. The amount reserved shall be determined by a formula based upon the per-pupil Title I expenditure and developed jointly by the liaison, senior manager of Federal Programs, and the Title 1 administrator. Homeless children shall be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education regulations and guidance.

TRAINING

On behalf of FLVS Full Time the Liaison will conduct training and sensitivity awareness activities for school staff including the school advocates and other staff that would be in a position to identify homeless students at least once each year. The trainings and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, and ensure compliance with this policy.

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