

HOMELESS EDUCATION AND ENROLLMENT

The Board will ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to free, appropriate educational programs, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State of Florida academic standards, and are not segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The Board will establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

The overall goal of the Homeless Education Program of Alachua County is to remove all barriers that affect the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth. To that end, all school personnel must be sensitive to the implications surrounding homelessness.

The District Homeless Liaison shall make a final determination of homeless status on a case-by-case basis and will make all determinations based upon the federal McKinney-Vento Act.

A. Definitions

1. The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children & youth as individuals who “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence”. This includes:

a. Students who are sharing housing or doubled-up with family or friends due to a economic hardship, loss of housing, or similar reason;

b. Students who are living in motels, hotels, FEMA trailers, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;

c. Students who are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are waiting foster care placement;

d. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

1 e. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned
2 buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar
3 settings;

4 Migratory students, preschool-aged children (3 & 4 years old), and
5 unaccompanied youth qualify as homeless if they are living in any of the
6 circumstances described above (a-e).

7 2. The term "unaccompanied youth" means a student who is not in the
8 physical custody of a parent/guardian. This includes youth living in a
9 runaway shelter, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or other
10 inadequate housing; and school-age unwed mothers living in homes for
11 teen mothers who have no other housing available.

12 3. The term "school of origin" means the school that the student attended
13 when permanently housed or the school where the child or youth was
14 last enrolled.

15 4. The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" mean attending school and
16 participating fully in school activities.

17 5. The term "immediate" means without delay.

18 6. The term "parent" means parent or guardian of a student.

19 7. The term "liaison" means the staff person designated by the Board as the
20 person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by
21 the McKinney-Vento Act.

22 **B. Residency**

23 A homeless student is considered a resident if the child or youth is within the
24 District with a purpose to live here temporarily, but not necessarily to remain
25 permanently.

26 1. The student shall be considered a resident when living with a parent,
27 guardian, or person in loco parentis not solely for school purposes or for
28 participation in extracurricular activities.

29 2. Homeless students who do not live with their parents or guardians may
30 enroll themselves in school.

- 1 3. The address listed on the *Children at Promise Residency Questionnaire*
2 (Form 5511.01 F1) is evidence that the student lives in the District and
3 qualifies for services under the McKinney-Vento Act.

4 **C. Enrollment**

5 The Board will immediately enroll a homeless student, new to the District, in
6 school, even if s/he does not have the documents usually required for
7 enrollment, such as school records, medical records or proof of residency. The
8 parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth must complete the *Children at*
9 *Promise Residency Questionnaire* (Form 5111.01 F1) available at each school
10 and also on the District's website.

- 11 1. The Board will ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or
12 segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. A homeless student
13 has the right to be assigned to the school in the attendance zone in
14 which the student is actually living or to the student's school of origin as
15 requested by the parent/guardian and in accordance with the student's
16 best interest, or to the school assigned as a result of the final decision
17 made during the dispute resolution process.

- 18 2. Homeless students who choose to remain in their school of origin have
19 the right to remain there until the end of the school year. However, once
20 permanent housing is obtained, the student may be required to attend
21 the school zoned for the location of his/her permanent housing for the
22 next school year, or may request a zoning exemption in accordance with
23 **Policy 5120, Assignment Within the District.**

- 24 3. If a homeless student arrives without records, it is the responsibility of
25 the enrolling school to contact the former school to request the missing
26 documents/records. The Homeless Liaison may be contacted if
27 additional support is needed in this effort.

- 28 4. Any parent, guardian or person in loco parentis who has legal or physical
29 custody of a homeless child or youth may enroll that child or youth
30 directly in a District school.

1 **D. Services and Programs**

2 Homeless students shall be provided services and educational programs
3 comparable to those offered to other students in the school selected, including
4 the following:

5 1. Preschool programs administered by the Board;

6 2. Educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria,
7 including special education and related services, gifted programs, and
8 programs for English language learners;

9 3. Vocational and technical education programs;

10 4. School nutrition programs;

11 5. Title I; and

12 6. Before- and After-School programs.

13 **E. Transportation**

14 If requested by a parent/guardian or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth,
15 the Homeless Liaison, the Board shall ensure that, to the extent feasible,
16 transportation will be provided for a homeless student to the school of origin.

17 1. If the homeless student lives outside the zone in which the school of
18 origin is located, transportation will be provided to the school of origin at
19 the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.

20 2. If the homeless student moves to an area served by another district,
21 while continuing his or her education at the school of origin, the Alachua
22 District and the district in which the student resides will agree upon a
23 method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the
24 school of origin. If the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the
25 responsibility and costs will be shared equally.

1 **F. School Selection & Dispute Resolution Process**

2 Upon request by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the Board will,
3 to the extent feasible and in the student's best interest, continue the homeless
4 student's education in his/her school of origin for the duration of homelessness
5 or the zoned school in the attendance area in which the homeless student is
6 actually living.

7 If while determining the best interest of the student, a dispute develops over the
8 selection or enrollment options, the District must immediately enroll the
9 homeless child or unaccompanied youth in the school in which enrollment is
10 sought by the parent/guardian until the dispute is resolved. In the case of an
11 unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison will ensure that the youth is
12 enrolled pending the resolution of the dispute.

13 The following steps will be followed for Dispute Resolutions:

14 1. The school administrator will give a written *Notice of Enrollment Decision*
15 (Form 5111.01 F2) to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth by
16 hand-delivery. A copy of the notice must also be given to the Homeless
17 Liaison.

18 2. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth may initiate an appeal in
19 writing or verbally with the Homeless Liaison within five (5) school days
20 after receipt of the *Notice of Enrollment Decision*. *The Appeal of*
21 *Enrollment Decision form* (Form 5111.01 F3) will be used to document the
22 appeal.

23 3. The Appeal Process will be considered at three levels:

24 a. **Level I**

25 The Homeless Liaison will meet with the parent/guardian and will
26 make a written decision and explanation within two (2) school
27 days after receipt of the appeal. If the issue is unresolved at Level
28 I, the parent/guardian may move the appeal to Level II within one
29 (1) school day from receipt of the Level I decision.

1 b. **Level II**

2 The Homeless Program Supervisor/Director will meet with the
3 parent/guardian and will make a written decision and explanation
4 within two (2) school days after receipt of the appeal to Level II. If
5 the issue is unresolved at Level II, then the parent/guardian may
6 move the appeal to Level III within one (1) school day from receipt
7 of the Level II decision.

8 c. **Level III**

9 The Superintendent will meet with the parent/guardian and will
10 make a written decision and explanation within four (4) school
11 days from the receipt of the appeal at Level III.

12 The dispute resolution process shall be as informal and accessible as
13 possible, consistent with impartial and complete review. The timeline for
14 the appeal may be extended by mutual agreement between both parties.

15 At each level of the appeal process, a written explanation of the school
16 selection decision shall be provided to the parent/guardian. The level III
17 decision should also include a statement regarding the right to appeal
18 the district-level decision to the Florida Department of Education
19 (FDOE).

- 20 4. If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth desires to appeal the
21 District Level III Decision, the District Homeless Liaison will provide
22 him/her with a copy of the FDOE *School Dispute Resolution Appeal*
23 *Process* form, available on the FDOE Homeless Education website
24 (<http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/titlex.asp>). The parent/guardian or
25 unaccompanied youth must file the state-level appeal within (10) ten
26 working days after receiving the Level III District-Level School Decision.

27 F.S. 1003.01(12), 1003.21(1)(f) F.S.
28 The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§11431 – 11436.
29 Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§6311 – 6315.
30 The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§1400 *et seq.*
31 Child Nutrition Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Policy, April 6, 2002
32 Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human
33 Services Policy, June 5, 1992

34
35 Adopted 7/17/07
36 Revised _____

HOMELESS STUDENTS

~~Children who meet the Federal definition of "homeless" will be provided a free and appropriate public education in the same manner as all other students of the District and will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. Homeless students shall have access to the education and related services they need so they can meet the same challenging State achievement standards as their peers. Homeless students shall be kept in their school of origin to the extent feasible while the students are homeless unless the parent objects. A student's school of origin is the school s/he attended when s/he was permanently housed or the school in which s/he was last enrolled. Students have a right to enroll in school immediately, even if they do not have required documents such as school records, medical records, proof of residency and other documents. See Policy 5320, Immunization. No School Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.~~

~~Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in the District including:~~

~~_____ A. _____ transportation services, including, at the parent's or guardian's or liaison's request, transportation to and from the school of origin;~~

~~_____ B. _____ educational services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or similar State and local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;~~

~~_____ C. _____ programs in vocational and technical education;~~

~~_____ D. _____ programs for gifted and talented students; and~~

~~_____ E. _____ school nutrition programs.~~

~~The Superintendent will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as assigned by the Superintendent. Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth as well as with community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth.~~

~~42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq~~