

Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

As required by law, the District will work with students experiencing homelessness, and their families, to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate education (including preschool education) given to other students. Special attention will be given to making sure of the identification, enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as lessening educational barriers to their academic success. Also, the District will take reasonable steps to make sure that students experiencing homelessness are not treated differently or moved into a separate school or separate program within a school on the basis of their homeless status.

Students experiencing homelessness will be given district services for which they are eligible, including comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

The definition of homelessness is lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including those students who are:

- A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- B. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- C. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. Abandoned in hospitals;
- E. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation;
- F. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
- G. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The superintendent will select a staff person to be the District's liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison may simultaneously serve as a coordinator for other federal programs, given that they are able to carry out the duties listed in the procedure that goes along with this policy.

If the District has identified more than ten unaccompanied youth, meaning youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and including youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, the McKinney-Vento Liaison will work with principals at each secondary school to make sure there's an on-site contact for each unaccompanied youth.

Best interest determination

In making a decision as to which school is in the student's best interest to attend, the District will assume that it is in the student's best interest to remain enrolled in their school of origin, unless such enrollment is against the wishes of a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth.

Attendance options will be made available to families experiencing homelessness on the same terms as families residing in the District, including attendance rights acquired by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, and intra and inter-district choice options.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian will be informed of the District's decision and the reasons therefor, (or informed if the student does not qualify for McKinney-Vento, if related) and their appeal rights in writing and in the language they can understand. The District's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school will immediately enroll the student, according to District policies. However, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document needed for enrollment, including academic records, medical records, proof of residency, mailing address or other documentation, or denied or delayed due to missed application deadlines or fees, fines or absences at a previous school.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student will be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to get current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the District liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school will be requested from the previous school according to District policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with District policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. However, emergency contact information cannot be demanded in a form or manner that creates a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

Students experiencing homelessness are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a student experiencing homelessness is living in another district, but will attend his or her school of origin in this District, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally, as required by state law.

The District's liaison for homeless students and their families will coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to children, young people and their families experiencing homelessness; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The notice must be disseminated in a manner and form that parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth receiving services can understand, including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in their native language. The District's liaison will also review and recommend changes to District policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of students experiencing homelessness, and will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined by the state-level OSPI coordinator for children experiencing homelessness.

Annually, the school board will review and make required updates to this policy.

Facilitating on-time grade level progression

The District will:

- 1.) Waive specific courses needed for graduation for students experiencing homelessness if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district; or
- 2.) Provide reasonable justification for denial of the waiver.

In the event the District denies a waiver and the student would have qualified to graduate from their sending school district, the District will provide a different process of getting the needed coursework so that the student may graduate on time.

The District will group together partial credit, unresolved or incomplete coursework and will provide students experiencing homelessness with opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.

For students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, the District will grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of the withdrawal or transfer. When the District receives a transfer student in these conditions, it will accept the student's partial credits, apply them to the student's academic progress or graduation or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the District.

In the event a student is transferring at the beginning of, or during, their junior or senior year of high school and has met the graduation requirements of the sending district, but has not met the requirements of the Bellevue School District, the McKinney-Vento Liaison will work with the sending district to make sure the student will be awarded a diploma from the sending district..

In the event a student enrolled in three or more school districts as a high school student, has met state requirements, has moved to the District, but is ineligible to graduate from the District after all alternatives have been considered, the District will waive its local requirements and ensure that the student receives a diploma.

Access to Academics and Extracurricular Activities

The superintendent will establish procedures to make sure that that students experiencing homelessness and young people who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including but not limited to summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement and online learning. Also, outstanding fines, fees or absences must not present barriers to enrollment or participation in activities for youth that qualify for support through this policy. Local liaisons will assist students experiencing homelessness with activities, such as enrolling in school and accessing school services, including free meals through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, the Fee Waiver Program, and approved co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in accordance with District policies and procedures through the district or one of its partner agencies and organizations.

Cross References:	Board Policy 3120	Enrollment
	3115	Field Trips
	3231	Student Records
	3413	Student Immunization and Life Threatening Conditions
	3520	Student Fees, Fines, Charges and Refunds
	2150	Co-Curricular Program

Legal References: RCW 28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences
 RCW 28A.320.192 On-time grade level progression and graduation of students who are homeless, dependent, or at-risk youth or children – Rules.
 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. No Child Left Behind Act
 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Management Resources:
 Policy News, October 2004 Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services Update

 Policy News, October 2002 NCLB Addresses Homeless Students

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