

HOMELESS EDUCATION

Students of homeless individuals and unaccompanied homeless youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian) residing in the District shall have equal access to the same free appropriate public education including comparable services, as provided to other students and youth who reside in the District. Homeless students and youth shall not be required to attend a separate school or program for homeless students and shall not be stigmatized by school personnel.

Definition of Homeless Students and Unaccompanied Youth

The term “homeless students and unaccompanied youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes students and youths who are:

- Living in an emergency shelter or transitional housing.
- Abandoned in hospitals or awaiting foster care.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camp grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings.
- “Doubled up” living with friends or family due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason.

Migratory students and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition.

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with parents or in the case of unaccompanied youth, the local educational agency liaison. Homeless status may be documented through the SDOJ Homeless Referral form and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Homeless Identification Local Use form.

The School District of Jefferson does not discriminate against students on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental emotional or learning disability or handicap in its education programs or activities. Discrimination complaints shall be processed in accordance with established procedures.

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Procedure

School Selection

Placement in a school shall be in the student's best interest.

- The student's education may continue in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness and/or in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, or for the duration of the academic year, if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year.
- The student may enroll in a school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

The school of origin means the school that the student attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

In determining the best interests of the student to the extent feasible, the student will be kept in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's parent or guardian, for the duration of the homelessness.

In the case of unaccompanied youth, the local educational agency liaison or designee will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the requests of such unaccompanied youth.

Enrollment

The school shall immediately enroll the student/youth, even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school.

The term "enroll" and "enrollment" are defined to mean attending school and participating fully in school activities.

Residency

A homeless student is a resident if the student is personally present somewhere within the district with a purpose to remain but not necessarily to remain permanently.

The student shall be considered a resident when living with a parent, guardian, or person *in loco parentis* not solely for school purposes or for participation in extra curricular activities.

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

The address listed on the enrollment forms becomes proof of residency. If residency is questioned by the LEA, immediate enrollment will occur with homeless liaison following up to determine residency.

Comparable Services

Each homeless student or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, such as:

- Preschool programs
- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria such as ELL or special education programs
- Programs for at-risk students
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- School nutrition programs
- Title I services
- After-school programs
- Tutoring programs
- Summer school programs

Transportation

At the request of the parent, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local agency liaison or designee, transportation will be provided for homeless students living outside the walk zone to the school of origin for the duration of the homeless status.

Once permanent housing is found, the family has a choice to stay in the school they are attending, school of origin or attend the school where they found housing. If a family chooses to stay in the school of origin, transportation will be discontinued.

Permanent housing is defined as any signed lease or long-term approved living situation.

In the case where the school of origin and current residence are different local educational agencies, the two school districts will agree on a method for transportation and share costs.

Homeless Liaison or Designee

The homeless liaison or designee shall ensure that:

- Homeless students are voluntarily identified by school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies.
- Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the district.
- Homeless families, students receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services.
- The parents or guardians of a homeless student and any unaccompanied homeless youth is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the student/youth.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated in such public places as schools, meal sites, shelters and other locations frequented by low-income families.
- The homeless liaison assures that compliance with all policies and procedures and mediates enrollment disputes.

- The parents or guardians of a homeless student or youth, and unaccompanied youth, are informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin.
- Ensures the coordination of services between SDOJ and other homeless family service providers.
- Assistance is provided to students who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- Students are not segregated on the basis of their status as homeless.
- Programs for homeless students are coordinated with other federal and local programs.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the student shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.

Disputes should be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Appeals will go to the District Administrator or his/her designee. The parent or guardian of the child or youth, or unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the appealed decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision to the Office of Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. In the case of unaccompanied youth, the School District of Jefferson Homeless Liaison shall also ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.