

EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

Homeless children and youths residing in the District shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths who reside in the District. They shall be provided the services and have access to the programs and activities that are offered to other children attending District schools, including transportation services, educational services for which the children/youths meet eligibility criteria (e.g., special education, Title I programming, programs and services for English Learners), gifted and talented programming, career and technical education programs, and school nutrition programs. A homeless child or youth shall not be required to attend a separate school or program for homeless children and shall not be stigmatized by school personnel.

“Homeless children and youths” are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes, but is not limited to, children and unaccompanied youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus stations, or similar settings. The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

The Director of Special Education and Pupil Services has primary administrative-level oversight of the District’s services for homeless children and youths. He/she, or a qualified administrative-level designee, shall be responsible for (1) providing any required assurances to applicable state and federal agencies that the District is complying with applicable state and federal requirements related to the education of homeless children and youths; and (2) reasonably monitoring compliance with such assurances.

The Director of Special Education and Pupil Services shall serve as the District’s liaison for homeless children and youths. The District’s liaison for homeless children and youths will work with administrators and other District personnel to periodically review existing policies, procedures, practices, and data to identify and develop proposals to remedy and remove barriers that homeless children and youths may face in the school enrollment and admission processes, in regularly attending school, in accessing applicable support services (such as guidance counselors), in accessing academic programs, academic activities, or extracurricular activities, or in receiving appropriate credit for prior academic work.

The District’s liaison for homeless children and youths will also ensure that:

1. Homeless children and youths residing in the District are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies. Special attention will be given to the enrollment and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school.
2. Homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the District.

3. Homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start, early intervention services under laws applicable to students with disabilities, and other preschool programs.
4. Homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to other appropriate services (e.g., health care services, dental health services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services).
5. The parent or guardian of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the child/youth.
6. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents and guardians of such children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, such as the schools, public libraries and family shelters. The notice shall be disseminated in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths.
7. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with legal requirements.
8. The parent or guardian of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth are fully informed of transportation services that may be available to them under the law and they are assisted in accessing such transportation services.
9. School personnel providing services to homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support. The liaison for homeless children and youths will also receive and participate in professional development and other support activities as required by the Department of Public Instruction, the District and federal law.
10. Unaccompanied homeless youths are: (a) enrolled in school, (b) have opportunities to meet the same challenging academic standards as the District establishes for other children and youths, including receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, and, (c) are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087vy) and that they may obtain assistance from the District's liaison for homeless children and youths to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of such Act.
11. Appropriate school personnel assist homeless children and youths with their educational transitions (e.g., from early childhood to elementary school, elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, and from high school to post-secondary options).
12. The District's Title I plan describes the services the District will provide homeless children and youths to support the enrollment, attendance and success of homeless children and youths.
13. Reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to meet the established legal requirements related to homeless children and youths is collected, reported to the public, and provided to the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths.

14. School personnel, service providers, advocates working with homeless families, parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and homeless children and youths are informed about the liaison's duties.

ADOPTED: April 22, 2019

REVISED:

REVIEW DATE:

LEGAL REFERENCES:

Wisconsin Administrative Code

[PI 1](#) [Department of Public Instruction complaint resolution and appeals process; to be used in dealing with disputes involving homeless issues]

Federal Laws

[McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act](#) [equal access for homeless students; required policies to remove barriers]

Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [\[20 U.S.C. § 6312\]](#) [local educational agency plan requirements, including plan requirements related to homeless children and youths]

CROSS REFS: JHC-R, Procedures for Enrollment and Placement of Homeless Children and Youths
JB, Equal Educational Opportunities
JBB, Equal Educational Opportunities Coordinator

PROCEDURES FOR ENROLLMENT AND PLACEMENT OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

A. Admission and Placement of Homeless Child or Youth

When a homeless child or youth seeks enrollment in the District, these procedures shall be followed:

1. The homeless child's parent or guardian, or any unaccompanied homeless youth, shall be advised of their choice of schools. The homeless child/youth shall be allowed to either continue his/her education in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness or be placed in the school that similarly situated non-homeless children/youths living in the District are eligible to attend. "School of origin" means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including a preschool. When the child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term "school of origin" shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

School selection decisions shall be made based on the best interest of the homeless child/youth. In determining the best interest of the child/youth, the District shall:

- a. Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, and
- b. Consider student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of the homeless child/youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth.

If the District assigns a homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth, the District shall provide the child's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reason for its determination, including information regarding the right to appeal the school selection or enrollment decision. School selection or enrollment disputes shall be handled as outlined in Section B below.

2. The homeless child/youth shall be immediately enrolled in the assigned school. This must be done even if the child/youth is (a) unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization or other health records, proof of residency or other documentation, or (b) has missed application or enrollment deadlines during periods of homelessness. The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child/youth to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the child/youth needs to obtain immunizations or screenings, or immunization or other health records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian or the unaccompanied homeless youth to the District's liaison for homeless children and youths, who is expected to assist in obtaining the necessary records.

3. The homeless child/youth shall be placed in an appropriate grade level by the building principal or designee, using the same procedures that are used for placing non-homeless children and youths attending that school. Educational programming and services shall be provided for the child/youth consistent with legal requirements and established District policies and procedures.
4. Upon a determination of school placement, the District shall evaluate the transportation arrangements for the homeless child/youth in light of applicable legal requirements.
5. Once enrolled, homeless children/youths shall have all the rights and privileges of non-homeless children attending school in the District and shall be subject to the same school rules and regulations.

B. Eligibility, School Selection or Enrollment Disputes

1. If a dispute arises over eligibility, or school selection or enrollment in a school, the District's liaison for homeless children and youths shall be contacted and he/she shall attempt to resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent(s) or guardian or homeless youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision on the dispute and a notice of the right to appeal to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Appeals involving homeless issues shall be filed and processed in accordance with the complaint resolution process outlined in [Chapter PI 1](#) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.
2. The homeless child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which the enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.

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