

JECBD. Education of Students Experiencing Homelessness

Definitions

Enrollment means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

School of origin means the school that a student attended when permanently housed or the school where last enrolled. When the student has completed the final grade 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.

A student experiencing homelessness means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

1. Students who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or
2. Students who 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;
3. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and,
4. Migratory students who qualify as homeless because the students are living in circumstances described in 1-3.

Unaccompanied student means a student not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Eligible student in this AR means a student experiencing homelessness that meets the criteria set forth in the McKinney-Vento Act.

Assignment to School

Students experiencing homelessness have a right to attend their school of origin or the neighborhood school where they are currently staying. Residency for neighborhood school is determined by their nighttime accommodation.

The District shall, according to the student’s best interest, continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, or enroll the student in a District school in the attendance area in which the homeless student has temporary nighttime accommodations.

In determining the best interest of the eligible student, the District shall:

1. Presume that keeping the student in their school of origin is in their best interest, unless doing so is contrary to the request of the student’s parent or guardian;
2. Provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, if the District sends a student to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian. Refer to District McKinney-Vento Liaison to assist with the dispute resolution;
3. Ensure that the District Liaison assists with placement or enrollment decisions for an unaccompanied student-and considers the request of the student, and provides a notice of the right to appeal on placement and enrollment decisions.

Enrollment

The District shall immediately enroll the student in the school selected, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment such as academic records, medical records, proof of

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residency or other documentation. The McKinney-Vento Liaison will assist in obtaining necessary records or immunizations.

When staff enrolls a student they believe to be experiencing homeless, the District McKinney-Vento Liaison or Superintendent's designee should immediately be informed. All unaccompanied youth should be immediately referred to the District McKinney-Vento Liaison or the Superintendent's designee to determine if McKinney-Vento applies. Enrolling unaccompanied youth is addressed in McKinney-Vento and ORS 339.115 (7).

To verify age of enrollment without a birth certificate many types of documents can be accepted to prove age, including medical records, baptismal certificates, or a simple statement of age signed by the parent or guardian.

The District shall immediately contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other records.

Lack of guardianship papers cannot delay or prevent the enrollment of unaccompanied youth.

The District must enroll unaccompanied youth in the school where they are requesting enrollment even if it is against the wishes of the parent. Students do not lose their right to attend school when they are runaways. The school must enroll a student who has been reported to the police as a runaway. If staff is concerned that a student has been reported as a missing person they should notify the Building Administrator and the McKinney-Vento Liaison who will determine the appropriate referral. Safety of the youth should be considered prior to contacting parent.

A student shall be granted enrollment even if he or she has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

Records

Any records ordinarily maintained by the District, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs, shall be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a homeless student enters a new school or school District, consistent with state and federal law.

If a student experiencing homelessness leaves Bethel School District and owes money for fees or non-returned books, the records of that student cannot be held up by Bethel School District.

Services

Each eligible student shall be provided educational services for which the student is eligible comparable to services offered to other Bethel students including the following:

1. Transportation services;
2. Education services for which the student is eligible, such as:
 - a. Title I¹;
 - b. Special education;
 - c. Programs for-English Learners;
 - d. Career and technical education;

¹All eligible students under McKinney-Vento are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of their current academic performance.

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- e. Talented and gifted programs.
3. School nutrition programs.

Transportation to school of origin is provided. The McKinney-Vento Liaison will arrange case by case.

Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for free lunches and do not have to complete paperwork. Contact the McKinney-Vento Liaison who will then notify the Nutrition Program Manager.

Coordination

The District shall coordinate the provision of services to students experiencing homelessness with local social service agencies, and other agencies or programs providing services to students experiencing homelessness and their families. Services will also be provided in cooperation with other Districts on inter-district issues, such as transportation, transfer of school records, and issues concerning appropriate credit for full or partial course work completed at a prior school to ensure that eligible students have access to available educational and related services.

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over school selection, enrollment, or eligibility:

1. The student shall be immediately admitted to the school requested, pending resolution of the dispute.
2. Refer the student to the McKinney-Vento Liaison to assess residency and enrollment options as defined in the McKinney-Vento Act. In the case of unaccompanied youth, the McKinney-Vento Liaison should be contacted to represent the youth. If step 2 does not have a satisfactory resolution, then proceed to step 3.
3. The parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision regarding school selection, including the rights of the parent, guardian or student to appeal the decision through the McKinney-Vento Act dispute resolution and appeal process (complaint procedure, Policy LGA). If the District-level resolution is not satisfactory, the student, parent or guardian will be notified of their right to the appeal process with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) State Coordinator.
4. When inter-District issues arise, the Liaison will work with representatives from those Districts to resolve dispute.

District Liaison

The District's Liaison shall ensure that:

1. Eligible students are identified;
2. Eligible students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in District schools;
3. Families and eligible students have access to educational services through Head Start, Early Intervention and preschool services;

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4. Families and eligible students receive educational services for which they are eligible, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health service and other appropriate services;
5. Parents of eligible students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to the students and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their students;
6. Public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness is distributed where such students receive services (e.g., schools, shelters, public libraries and soup kitchens);
7. Enrollment disputes are mediated through McKinney-Vento Act dispute resolution procedures;
8. The parents of eligible students, or any unaccompanied student, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected;
9. School personnel, service providers and advocates working with students experiencing homelessness and their families are informed of the Liaison's duties.

The District's Liaison shall coordinate and collaborate with the ODE state coordinator, community and school personnel responsible for the provision of educational and related services to students experiencing homelessness.