

Union School District



Homeless Education Program Procedures for Homeless Students

This document contains board policy and procedures for determining homelessness and the supporting forms. Union School District Homeless Liaison Contact:

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Procedures for Homeless Students

Union School District is committed to educating homeless children and youth by serving each student to according to their individual needs.

1. Residency Requirements

Homelessness can be a sensitive issue for children and their families. In some cases, identification of student homelessness may be apparent, but may be more difficult to determine in others. School district personnel should be alert and sensitive to the issue as Union School District is obligated to identify and track its homeless student population.

Children/Students who meet the criteria for McKinney-Vento Homelessness must be given full and equal access to a free and appropriate public education, and ensured all opportunity for success in educational programming. The permanency and adequacy of the housing conditions for the child/student shall be considered when determining if a student qualifies as McKinney-Vento Homeless. The Homeless Liaison shall make a determination of the student's homelessness based upon the following criteria:

1. Sharing of housing with other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (doubled-up)
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camp grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
3. Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters
4. Abandoned in hospitals
5. Using public or private places not designed for regular sleeping accommodations for human beings, as a primary nighttime residence
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations, or similar settings
7. Living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples
8. Living as run-away children, abandoned or forced out of homes by parents/guardians or caretakers, or separated from parents/guardians for any reason
9. Living as school age parents/guardians in houses for school age parents/guardians if they have no other living accommodations

2. School Registration of Homeless Students

Homeless children and youth shall be immediately enrolled in school, even if the child or youth lacks the normally required documentation for enrollment, such as academic records from their previously attended school, medical records, proof of residency, etc. The enrolling school must immediately contact the last school attended to obtain relevant academic and other records as available.

Homeless status and the right to attend the school of origin for a child/youth experiencing homelessness extends for the duration of their homelessness. If the homeless child or youth becomes permanently housed during the academic year, they are entitled to stay in the school of origin for the remainder of the academic year. If the child or student becomes homeless between academic years, they are entitled to attend their school of origin for the following academic year. Subsequent to being registered, the homeless student should be immediately referred to the school counselor who shall make appropriate referrals for assistance.

3. Health Records and Birth Certificate Requirements

If a homeless child or youth seeks to register without immunization records, the registrar will contact the student's former school to request the student's health records, immunization records, and to discuss other enrollment/placement issues of interest. If information is not available to satisfy immunization compliance, this requirement should be temporarily waived, pending efforts to obtain the medical records. In the interim, the school nurse will collaborate with community health agencies to obtain proper immunizations.

If a birth certificate is not available, the student should be registered immediately and subsequent appropriate steps should be taken to resolve the issue.

4. Categorical Eligibility for Migrant, Homeless, and Runaway Children Under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

Effective July 1, 2004, Section 107 of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 amended Section 9(b) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to make runaway, homeless and migrant children categorically eligible for free meal benefits under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Guidelines set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for implementation of this amendment are as follows:

Documentation and Procedures

1. Homeless, runaway or migratory children are automatically certified as eligible for free meal benefits and can begin receiving free meals upon proper documentation for meals. Please note that documentation as a runaway, homeless, or migratory child/youth can only be provided by Migrant Education or Homeless staff.
2. Migrant Education/Homeless staff are responsible for providing proper documentation of a child's status to the Food Service Directors in each school district. If the district operates under the Community Eligible Provision status, all children will receive free meals.
3. Each year, a list of eligible migrant/homeless/runaway children as of the conclusion of the first week of school, that is signed and dated by authorized Migrant

Education/Homeless staff or an electronic list from authorized Migrant Education/Homeless staff of eligible migrant/homeless/runaway children shall be provided to the Food Service Director, unless the school operates under the Community Eligibility Provision status for the corresponding school year.

4. The lists should include each child's first name, middle name/initial, last name, and date of birth.
5. After the initial lists are provided at the beginning of the school year, proper documentation will be considered.
6. Once notification is received, the school food authorities/local education agencies must notify the responsible guardian as soon as it is possible about the child's free meal eligibility.

Considerations

Documentation of status provided by Migrant Education/Homeless staff is in lieu of free and reduced price meal applications and must be sought, as much as possible, prior to an application being completed by the responsible guardian.

Upon enrollment, if school district staff suspect that a child is migrant/homeless/runaway but the student is not enrolled by Migrant Education/Homeless staff, contact local Migrant Education/Homeless staff so that a staff person can determine the child's eligibility status.

Additional Information

Contact information for Migrant Education/Homeless staff in each area is accessible by going to their respective websites:

Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program –

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K12/Migrant%20Education/Pages/default.aspx>

Pennsylvania Homeless Children's Initiative –

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K12/Homeless%20Education/Pages/default.aspx>

The Department of Education will provide Migrant Education/Homeless staff in the local areas with a list of names and email addresses for each Food Service Director by district.

Additional information regarding the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs can be found at <https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Food-Nutrition/programs/Pages/National-School-LunchProgram.aspx>

5. Educational Records, Transfer, and Withdrawal

Educational information needed for proper placement should initially be obtained from the student's former school. If educational records or educational information are not available, the student should be registered and an educational record developed in accordance with the Union School District Student Records Guidelines. In these cases, an academic diagnostic test should be administered or an appropriate review of school records by the principal and/or school counselor shall be conducted to assist in determining an appropriate placement according to the student's level of academic skill.

If a homeless student seeks to register without having appropriate transfer forms, the receiving school should immediately register the student, contact the former school for transfer information, and request that the educational record be forwarded. The sending school should provide requested information during a telephone contact and forward educational records promptly.

Any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding which homeless child or youth shall be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school or school district, and in a manner consistent with Section 444 of the General Education Provision Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g).

6. Custody/Guardianship Requirements

An unaccompanied youth who is experiencing homelessness must be enrolled immediately, even if the youth does not have a fixed place of residence, proper documentation, or solely because the youth is not under the supervision of a parent, guardian, or person in a parental relationship. The LEA homeless liaison will assist in enrollment.

The school principal/designee, in conjunction with the school counselor/homeless liaison, should make every effort to locate the parent or guardian to complete the registration process. In unusual situations, Child and Youth Services or Department of Social Services may be contacted, with referrals consistent with school policy in reporting cases of parental neglect.

7. Determining Feasibility for School Placement

The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to consider the school of origin as the first option in school enrollment. Parents may choose the school of origin or the school of residency where the child is currently living. The following individuals may be consulted in determining what placement is in the child's best interest:

- The homeless child
- The parents or caretakers of the homeless child
- Homeless shelter personnel
- Representatives of social service agencies
- School division homeless education coordinators
- School social workers
- School counselors

It is the school district's responsibility to determine the school of origin and residency and to resolve any conflict concerning the school placement that is in the best interest of the student. Whenever possible, the school district is to comply with the parents'/caretakers' wishes. If the school district and parents do not agree on the appropriate placement, the state's enrollment dispute resolution procedure must be followed. The student should be enrolled in the school the parents have chosen during the resolution process. If the schools of residency and of origin are in different school districts and are determined as the best placement, the local homeless education liaisons from both school districts must work together to arrange transportation.

The McKinney-Vento Act states that once a child has been identified as homeless, residency requirements do not apply. The federal law requires that a child or youth experiencing homelessness attends:

- The school of origin: This is the school that the child last attended before experiencing homelessness or the school where the student was last enrolled or:
- The school of residency: The school identified by the attendance zone in which the student is currently physically staying.

Enrollment should take place immediately.

A worksheet is provided to assist in determining the feasibility for school placement decisions that are in the students' best interest. (Attachment A)

8. Enrollment Dispute Resolution

Disagreements and disputes are to be settled as close to the point of conflict as possible. Each local homeless education liaison shall assist the family and school to ensure compliance with federal and state legislation and policy governing the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The liaison shall work with appropriate local school division representatives to address any policies or procedures that are identified as barriers in the access to and success within a free appropriate public education. The Office of the State Coordinator of Homeless Education may be consulted at any time for technical assistance.

9. Dispute Resolution Process for School Selection or Enrollment

If a school chooses to send a child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or the school selected by the family or youth, the school shall consult with the local homeless education liaison prior to making the final placement determination. If the school's denial of enrollment is supported by a review of feasibility and best interest, the school shall provide the parent or guardian of the child or youth with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian or youth to appeal the decision. (Attachment B)

If an appeal is requested either in writing or verbally through the use of Attachment C, the school shall:

- Immediately admit the student to the school in which enrollment is sought and provide all services for which the student is eligible, pending resolution of the dispute and
- Refer the child, youth, parent, or guardian to the designated local homeless education liaison who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute

Review Procedure

If disputes or complaints of non-compliance arise regarding the education for homeless children and youth, the Pennsylvania Department of Education recommends that:

- A. The person having the complaint first contact the school or district to present their concerns to the people closest to the situation and must likely be able to resolve it quickly
- B. If Step A is not successful or is not possible under the circumstances, contact should be made with the Homeless Project Educational Liaison, or PDE will accept complaints directly through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program at phone number (717) 772-2066 (Attachment D)
- C. Individual cases may be referred to the PDE's Office of Chief Counsel and the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education as needed by the State Homeless Coordinator and;
- D. PDE will deliver a response within 15 business days of the receipt of the complaint. The complaint may arrive in the form of a copy of the school/district letter or on the Dispute Letter Form if given directly to a Liaison of the Homeless Children's Initiative

10. Procedures for Identification of Enrolled Students as Homeless

When school personnel have been made aware that a student has become homeless or is suspected to be homeless due to a sudden change in living arrangements, the building principal or counselor should attempt to contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) to verify the information.

Once the information has been received/verified, the district homeless liaison is notified in order to review the information and to assist in making the final determination of homelessness.

Teachers and staff who receive information about a change in a student's living arrangements should immediately provide that information to their building principal or school counselor.

If a student has been determined to be homeless by the district homeless liaison, procedures should be followed as outlined in this document in order to determine residency and support services that are needed and/or required to be provided to the student. Support services may be coordinated through the Student Assistance Program.

If there are multiple students affected in the family who are enrolled in different buildings throughout the district, a coordination of support services should be implemented under the direction of the District Homeless Liaison via the Student Assistance Program.

FOCUS (SIS) Homeless Data Entry Procedures

When a child is identified as experiencing a homeless living situation, the shall meet with the enrollment officer for the district to complete the school registration process. The child will be enrolled with the district utilizing the available documentation provided by the child or guardian at the time of enrollment. If documentation is not available, the District will enroll the student immediately and will provide guidance/assistance in securing the required documentation. The child shall begin classes within 72 hours of completing the registration process.

Notification shall be provided to the District's Homeless Liaison for review of possible homeless status and status determination. If it is determined that the student is homeless, the homeless liaison and/or his/her designee shall contact the family and determine any special needs which may require accommodation. The student's guidance counselor shall also be notified of the child's status so he/she may coordinate additional services for the child.

11. Tracking system for Homeless Students

No student is removed from the spreadsheet during the program year. Updating the information periodically provides a historical record for that child/youth.

As such, by the end of the program year, the June spreadsheet will capture all children/youth experiencing homelessness in our district/school/facility for the program year and their information at the end of the year or the time at which they left or became no longer homeless.

Between July 1st and August 31st, the District Homeless Liaison, will identify those students who continue to qualify as a homeless student entering the new school year. Building principals, school counselors and SAP team coordinators will assist in this identification process by reviewing the final list of students who were identified as homeless during the previous school

year. Assessment of the student's current living conditions will be conducted to determine if the student continues to meet the criteria for being homeless.

12. Resources

Hotlines

Child Abuse Line – 1-800-932-0313

NW PA AIDS Alliance – 1-800-359-2437

Sexual/Domestic Violence/Other Crimes – 1-800-243-4944, or (814) 226-1710

Runaway – 1-800-231-6946

Clarion County Mental Health (814) 226-1080

Abuse/Assault

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women – (215) 351-0010

Passages – (814) 226-7273 or 1-800-793-3620

Stop Abuse For Everyone (SAFE) – (814) 226-8481

Pennsylvania State Police – Clarion Barracks – (814) 226-1710

Behavioral Issues

Student Assistance Program – (814) 226-1080

CASSP – (814) 226-6252

Clarion County Drug and Alcohol – (814) 226-6350

Clarion County Juvenile Probation – (814) 226-6020

Justice Works – (814) 590-8662

Service Access and Management – (814) 297-1100

Community Action

Clarion County Community Action – (814) 226-4785

Community Partners

United Way of Clarion County – (814) 226-8760

Daycares

Helping Hands Day Care – (814) 745-2273

Pre-K Counts - (814) 745-3445

Noah's Kids – (814) 473-3482

Head Start – (814) 849-3660 or 1-800-628-6150

Family Problems

Family Psychological Associates – (814) 226-4912
Clarion Family Therapy – (814) 227-2941
Justice Works – (814) 590-8662
MHY Family Services – (814) 437-1246
Next Step – (814) 226-7007
Service Access and Management – (814) 297-1100
Shamrock Solutions – (814) 223-8696
CenClear – (814) 342-5845
Roads to Recovery (814) 226-1080

Food/Clothing

Salvation Army – 1-800-728-7825
Baker Street Church of God – (814) 473-3655
First United Methodist Church - (814) 473-6105
Rimersburg Presbyterian Church - (814) 473-3764
Sligo Presbyterian Church – (814) 745-2771

Fuel Assistance/Weatherization

Community Action – (814) 226-4785
Clarion County Assistance Office – (814) 226-1700

Housing

Clarion County Housing Authority – (814) 226-8910

Mental Health

CASSP – (814) 226-1080
Crisis Intervention – (814) 226-7223
Clarion Psychiatric Center – 1-800-253-4906
Family Psychological – (814) 226-4913
Shamrock Solutions – (814) 223-8696

Transportation

Clarion County Transportation Office – (814) 226-7012

Attachment A

Worksheet for Determining Feasibility for School Placement

Date: _____

Please provide the following information for the previous schools the child attended, listing the most recent school first.

1. Are the school of origin and the school of residency in the same or different public school district?

Dates of Attendance	School Name/State	Living Arrangement at the Time

2. What is the child's desired school of attendance?
3. What is the opinion of the parent or caregiver concerning the child's school of best interest?
4. What is the distance and time spent traveling to and from the current residence to the school of origin?
5. If transportation is not currently available back to the school of origin, how can it be arranged?
6. What time of year is it? (Which quarter of the school year, summer, etc.)

7. How long did the child attend the school of origin? Were meaningful social and educational relationships established?

8. Are there specified people in the school of origin who have been providing support or assistance to the family or child experiencing homelessness?

9. Are there special programs such as gifted, bilingual, or remedial education in which the child has been participating at the school of origin?
 - A. Please name the special programs if yes.

 - B. Are comparable programs available at the district of residence?

10. Based on the knowledge of the family situation, how long is it likely that the family will remain at the current residence?

11. What is the likelihood that the family experiencing homelessness will once again establish residency in the attendance area of the school of origin?

Recommendation:

Individuals consulted on this determination of feasibility for school placement in the student's best interest:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Signatures of the individual(s) making the recommendation:

1. _____

- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

**CC: Homeless Liaison
Attachment B**

Written Notification of Enrollment Decision

To be completed by the receiving school when an enrollment request is denied.

Date: _____

Person Completing the Form: _____

Title: _____

School: _____

In compliance with Sections 722(g)(3)(E) and 722(g)(3)(B)(ii) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001, the following written notification is provided to:

Parent or Guardian: _____

Student(s): _____

After reviewing your request to enroll the student(s) listed above, the enrollment request is denied. This determination was based upon:

You have the right to appeal this decision by completing the second page of this notice or by contacting the school division's local homeless education liaison:

Liaison's Name: _____ Title: _____

Phone Number: _____

In addition:

- The student(s) listed above has the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute.
- You may provide written or verbal documentation to support your position. You may use the form attached to this notification.
- You may seek the assistance of advocates or attorneys.
- You may contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education to discuss this decision with the State Coordinator for Homeless Education at (717) 783-6466

CC: Homeless Liaison

Parent

Attachment C

Written Notification of Enrollment Decision

To be completed by the parent, guardian, caretaker, or unaccompanied youth when a dispute arises. This information may be shared verbally with the local liaison, as an alternative to completing this form.

Date Submitted: _____

Student(s): _____

Person Completing Form: _____

Relation to the Student(s): _____

I may be contacted at (phone or email): _____

I wish to appeal the enrollment decision made by _____ School District.

I have been provided with:

_____ A written explanation of the school's decision, and

_____ Contact information for the local homeless education liaison

Dispute Resolution can be added to the form after it is finalized.

Optional: You may include a written explanation to support your appeal in this space or provide your explanation verbally:

The school provided me with a copy of this form when submitted. _____ (Initials)

CC: Homeless Liaison

Parent

Attachment D

**Pennsylvania Department of Education
Pennsylvania Homeless Children's Initiative**

Date: _____

State Coordinator
Education for Homeless Children & Youth Program
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street, 5th Floor Re: Homeless Dispute
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear State Coordinator:

My name is _____. My child(ren) attend school in the _____ School District. I need your help with the following problem(s). I have checked the line that fits my situation. I have included a brief statement in the space provided.

___ The school district would not enroll my child(ren).

___ Child(ren)_ couldn't begin school because they didn't have all their medical and/or school records.

___ Child(ren) not permitted to stay in their current school.

___ Special Education testing/placement services denied or unavailable.

___ School District will not provide transportation to stay in the current school.

___ Other

If prior help has been provided to me, I have listed the steps already taken to help me to resolve this issue on the other side of this form.

Please call me at () _____ or you can write to me at my address of: _____

Thank you in advance for looking into this matter.

_____ (Name of Parent/Guardian)