

Sky Mountain Charter School Education for Homeless Children and Youth Policy

Introduction

The Governing Board desires to ensure that homeless students have access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students within the school. The school shall provide homeless students with access to education and other services necessary for them to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students.

Homeless students shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way. The Director or designee shall ensure that placement decisions for homeless students are based on the student's best interest as defined in law and administrative regulation.

When there are at least 15 homeless students in the school, the local control and accountability plan (LCAP) shall include goals and specific actions to improve student achievement and other outcomes of homeless students. (California Education Code [EC] sections 52052, 52060).

Definitions

The term homeless children and youth means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes: (42 United States Code [42 U.S.C.] Section 11434a; EC Section 48852.7)

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 the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or, are abandoned in hospitals
2. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
3. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
4. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in conditions above
5. Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

The term school of origin means the school that the homeless student attended when permanently housed or the school in which he/she was last enrolled. If the school the homeless student attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which he/she was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that he/she attended within the preceding 15 months and with which he/she is connected, the school liaison shall determine, in consultation with and with the agreement of the homeless student and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student, and in the best interests of the homeless student, which school shall be deemed the school of origin. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][3][I]; EC Section 48852.7)

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When determining the best interest in making educational and school placement decisions for a homeless student, consideration is given to, among other factors, educational stability, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress, and the student's access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all enrolled students. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][3][B]; EC Sections 48850, 48853)

IEM Schools McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison

Contact information for the liaison for homeless students can be obtained at the main office:

IEM Charter Schools
McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison
4535 Missouri Flat Rd #1A.
Placerville, CA 95667
(800) 979-4436

The school's liaison for homeless students shall: (EC Section 48852.5)

1. Ensure that homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordinated activities with other entities and agencies
2. Ensure that homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, IEM charter schools
3. Ensure that homeless families receive educational services for which they are eligible
4. Inform parents/guardians of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and ensure that they are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children
5. Disseminate notice of the educational rights of enrolled homeless students that provide services to homeless children and at places where they receive services, such as schools, family shelters, and hunger relief agencies
6. Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with law and school policy
7. When notified pursuant to EC Section 48918.1, assist, facilitate, or represent a homeless student who is undergoing a disciplinary proceeding that could result in his/her expulsion
8. When notified pursuant to EC Section 48915.5, participate in an individualized education program team meeting to make a manifestation determination regarding the behavior of a student with a disability
9. Assist a homeless student to obtain records necessary for his/her enrollment into or transfer out of the school, including immunization, medical, and academic records

Enrollment

The school shall make placement decisions for homeless students based on the student's best interest. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][3][B]; EC Section 48852.7)

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When making a placement decision for a homeless student, the Director or designee may consider the age of the student, the distance of the commute and the impact it may have on the student's education, personal safety issues, the student's need for special instruction, the length of anticipated stay in the temporary shelter or other temporary location, likely area of future housing, school placement of siblings, and the time remaining in the school year.

However, placement decisions shall not be based on whether a homeless student lives with his/her homeless parent/guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions, consider the views of the student, and provide notice to the student of his/her appeal rights.

In determining a student's best interest, a homeless student shall, to the extent feasible, be placed in his/her school of origin, unless his/her parent/guardian requests otherwise.

Once a placement decision has been made, the principal or designee shall immediately enroll the student in the school of choice once there is an available spot with an ES. The student shall be enrolled even if he/she:

1. Has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks, or other items or monies due to the school last attended
2. Does not have clothing normally required by the school
3. Is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, proof of residency, and medical records, including, but not limited to, records or other proof of immunization history

The Director or designee shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain the relevant records. If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Director or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the school liaison for homeless students. The school liaison shall assist the parent/guardian, or the student if he/she is an unaccompanied youth, in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student.

If the student is placed at a school other than his/her school of origin or the school requested by his/her parent/guardian, the Director or designee shall provide the parent/guardian with a written explanation of the decision along with a statement regarding the parent/guardian's right to appeal the placement decision. The student may continue attending his/her school of origin for the duration of the homelessness. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432; EC Section 48852.7)

To ensure that the homeless student has the benefit of matriculating with his/her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns, the following shall apply: (EC Section 48852.7)

1. If the student is transitioning between grade levels, he/she shall be allowed to continue in the same attendance area.

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2. If the student is transitioning to a middle school or high school, and the school designated for matriculation is in another school district, he/she shall be allowed to continue to the school designated for matriculation in that district.

If the student's status changes before the end of the school year so that he/she is no longer homeless, he/she shall be allowed to stay in the school of origin: (EC Section 48852.7)

1. Through the duration of the school year if he/she is in grades K-8
2. Through graduation if he/she is in high school

Resolving Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection or enrollment in our school, the student shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][3])

The parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the placement decision, which shall be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in language that the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth can understand. The written explanation shall include:

1. The schools homeless liaison's contact information
2. A description of the school's placement decision
3. Notice of the student's right to enroll in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute, including the right to fully participate in all school activities
4. Notice of the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth's right to appeal the decision to the county office of education and, if necessary, to the California Department of Education (CDE)

The school's homeless liaison shall work to resolve an enrollment dispute as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][3][E]). In working with a student's parents/guardians to resolve an enrollment dispute, the school's liaison shall:

1. Inform them that they may provide written and/or oral documentation to support their position
2. Inform them that they may seek the assistance of social services, advocates, and/or service providers in having the dispute resolved
3. Provide them a simple form that they may use and turn in to the school to initiate the dispute resolution process
4. Provide them a copy of the dispute form they submit for their records
5. Provide them the outcome of the dispute for their records

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If the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth chooses to appeal the school's placement decision, the school liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the homeless liaison at the county office of education (COE).

Transfer of Coursework and Credits

When a homeless student transfers into our school, we shall accept and issue full credit for any coursework that the student has satisfactorily completed while attending another public school, a juvenile court school, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency and shall not require the student to retake the course. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][1][F]; EC Section 51225.2)

If the homeless student did not complete the entire course, he/she shall be issued partial credit for the coursework completed and shall be required to take the portion of the course that he/she did not complete at his/her previous school. Whenever partial credit is issued to a homeless student in any particular course, he/she shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that he/she may continue and complete the entire course. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][1][F]; EC Section 51225.2)

Partial credits and grades earned by a student shall be included on the student's official transcript when the school is notified of the student's transfer, as required under EC Section 49069.5. In no event shall the school prevent a homeless student from taking or retaking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University or the University of California. (EC Section 51225.2)

Applicability of Graduation Requirements

To obtain a high school diploma, a homeless student shall complete all courses required by EC Section 51225.3 and fulfill any additional graduation requirements prescribed by the Governing Board.

However, when a homeless student who has completed his/her second year of high school transfers into the school, he/she shall be exempted from all school-established graduation requirements, unless the school makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the additional requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of his/her fourth year of high school. Within 30 school days of the homeless student's transfer, the Director or designee shall notify the student, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her, and the school liaison for homeless students of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for it. If the Director or designee fails to provide this notification, the student shall be eligible for the exemption once notified, even if the notification occurs after the student is no longer homeless. (EC Section 51225.1)

To determine whether a homeless student is in his/her third or fourth year of high school, the school shall use either the number of credits he/she has earned as of the date of the transfer or

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the length of his/her school enrollment, whichever qualifies him/her for the exemption. (EC Section 51225.1)

The Director or designee shall notify any homeless student who is granted an exemption and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her how any requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution. If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the exemption shall continue to apply after the student is no longer homeless. (EC Section 51225.1)

If the Director or designee determines that a homeless student is reasonably able to complete school graduation requirements within his/her fifth year of high school, he/she shall: (EC Section 51225.1)

1. Inform the student and, if under 18 years of age, the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her, of the option available to the student to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the school's graduation requirements and how that will affect his/her ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution
2. Provide information to the homeless student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges
3. Upon agreement with the homeless student or with the person holding the right to make educational decisions for him/her if he/she is under 18 years of age, permit the student to stay in school for a fifth year to complete the school's graduation requirements

Complaints

Complaints regarding violations of this policy or the educational rights of homeless students, as specified in EC sections 51225.1 and 51225.2, can be addressed through the school's uniform complaint procedure.