

**STUDENTS**

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**Homeless Students****I. DEFINITIONS**

**A. Federal Definition** - Homeless students are federally defined as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This definition includes the following types of students who are:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Abandoned in hospitals;
5. Awaiting foster care placement;
6. 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;
7. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
8. Migratory children living in the above described circumstances.

**B. State Statutes** - defines non-residency as children residing with relatives or non-relatives, when it is the intention of such relatives or non-relatives and of the children or their parents or guardians that such residence is to be (1) permanent, (2) provided without pay and (3) not for the sole purpose of obtaining school accommodations. In addition, the statute indicates that children in temporary shelters are entitled to free school privileges from either the school district in which the shelter is located or from the school district in which the child would otherwise reside, if not for the need for temporary shelter. The district has an obligation to identify homeless and migratory children. “Enroll” and “enrollment” are federally defined to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. “Unaccompanied youth” includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

**II. DISTRICT OBLIGATIONS REGARDING PLACEMENT OF HOMELESS STUDENTS**

- a. District policy must remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth, including such barriers as outstanding fees, fines or absences.

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**(Continued)**

- b. The District must continue the student's education in the "school of origin" which is the school the homeless child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment. School of origin may include pre-school administered by the District and, when a homeless child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin; school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools. The District must presume that keeping a homeless child or youth in the school of origin is in such individual's best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the individuals' parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth **OR**
- c. The District must enroll the homeless child or youth in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the area where the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. The school selected based on a homeless child or youth's best interest shall immediately enroll such child even if he/she missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- d. The District is required, "to the extent feasible" to keep the homeless child or youth in the school of origin unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian. If the District determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin, the District will provide a written explanation of its determining reasons, in a manner and form this understandable.
- e. The homeless child or youth's right to attend the school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness. When the child or youth completes the final grade served by the school of origin; it also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for all feeder schools.
- f. If a child or youth becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he/she is entitled to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- g. A child or youth who becomes homeless in between academic years is entitled to attend his/her school of origin for the following academic year.
- h. The District must provide written explanation, including the right to appeal, whenever the school District sends the homeless child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian.

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**Homeless Students****II. DISTRICT OBLIGATIONS REGARDING PLACEMENT OF HOMELESS STUDENTS****(Continued)**

- i. With an “unaccompanied youth,” the District’s homeless liaison must assist in the placement/enrollment decisions, considering the youth’s wishes, and provide notice of appeal under the Act’s enrollment disputes provision.
- j. The District’s liaison must participate in professional development and technical assistance provided the State Office of the Homeless Coordinator.
- k. The definition of “school of origin” includes preschools operated by a local school district.
- l. Information about a homeless child or youth’s living situation shall be treated as a student education record, subject to FERPA protections and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

**III. APPEAL PROCEDURES**

- A. Appeals Process** - C.G.S. 10-186 defines the process that must be used for resolving issues involving homeless students. The state is required to establish an appeal process.
- B. Placement During An Appeal** – Federal law requires school districts to allow homeless students to “stay put.” In a dispute over eligibility, the child or youth shall immediately be enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- C. District Liaison’s Role in an Appeal** – The District’s homeless liaison shall carry out the dispute resolution process expeditiously and, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
- D. Parent/Guardian’s Right in an Appeal** – The parent/guardian shall be made aware of the right to appeal the decision to the Board of Education. The Board shall issue a written decision on the dispute within 10 days of the receipt of the appeal and hand deliver the written decision and notice of right-to-appeal to the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths to the parents/guardians (or student if applicable). The decision of the State Coordinator shall be final.

**STUDENTS****5118.1a****Homeless Students****IV. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO HOMELESS STUDENTS**

1. Education services are to be comparable to those received by other students in the school.
2. Such students may be entitled to such services, through Heat Start programs, as Title I, state/local remedial programs, special education, limited English proficiency, vocational education, gifted/talented, school nutrition programs and preschool programs administered by the District.
3. Homelessness alone is not to be considered a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.
4. Homeless students may be segregated for short periods of time only for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special or supplemental services.

**V. SCHOOL SELECTION****A. Standards for School Selection**

1. The District shall make a determination as to the best interests of a homeless child or youth to make a determination as to the appropriate school of placement.
2. The District is required to keep a homeless child or youth to his/her school origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year, to the extent feasible, unless it is against the wishes of the parent or guardian. Otherwise, the homeless child or youth shall be enrolled in a public school that non-homeless students who live in the area where the child or youth is actually living or eligible to attend.
3. The District must presume that keeping the homeless child or youth in the school of origin is in the student's best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the child or youth's best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the child or youth's parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth. In considering the child or youth's best interest, the District must consider student-centered factors related to the child or youth's best interest, giving priority to the request of the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth.

**Homeless Students****V. SCHOOL SELECTION (Continued)****B. Procedures for Review of School Selection Recommendation**

1. The Principal or his/her designee of the school in which enrollment is sought shall review an enrollment request in accordance with the standards discussed above, and shall make an initial recommendation. If the Principal or his/her designee's recommendation is to select a placement other than the school desired by the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the homeless child or youth or unaccompanied youth, then the Principal or his/her designee shall refer the matter to the Superintendent or his/her designee for review of the recommendation and the reasons therefore, and shall notify the District's Homeless Liaison of the same.
2. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall review the matter and consult with the District Homeless Liaison concerning same. If the Superintendent or his/her designee agrees with the recommendation of the Principal or his/her designee, and a dispute remains between the District and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth about a school selection and/or enrollment decision; the Superintendent or his/her designee shall provide the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the District's decision regarding this matter and the right to appeal such decision to the Board of Education.

**C. Dispute Resolution Process**

1. The District's Homeless Liaison shall be responsible for promoting objective and expeditious dispute resolutions, and adherence to these administrative regulations.
2. If the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth disputes the school placement decision or enrollment, the District must immediately enroll the homeless child or youth in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The homeless child or youth shall also have the right to all appropriate education services, including transportation to and from the school in which enrollment is sought, while the dispute is pending.
3. If necessary, the District Homeless Liaison shall assist parent(s) or guardian(s) of a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth with completion of the necessary appeal paperwork required to file for an appeal to the Board of Education, and provide the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth with a copy of Section 10-186(b).

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4. Within ten (10) days of receipt of an appeal to the Board of Education by a parent(s) or guardian(s) of a homeless child or youth or an unaccompanied youth, the District shall hold a hearing before the Board of Education concerning such appeal, and such hearing shall be conducted in accordance with Section 10-186(b).

**VI. TRANSPORTATION OBLIGATIONS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS**

1. Services must be comparable to those provided other students in the selected school.
2. A homeless child or youth must be provided transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested by the parent/guardian, if the school is within the school district. Transportation shall be provided for the entire time the child or youth is homeless.
3. If the school of origin is in a different school district from where the child or youth is currently living, both school districts are to agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs and responsibility equally.
4. When the child or youth obtains permanent housing, transportation to and from the school of origin must be provided until the end of the academic year. It is in the student's best interest to remain in that school.
5. Transportation to the school of origin shall also be provided during pending dispute.

**VII. ENROLLMENT REQUESTS FROM HOMELESS PARENTS**

1. The selected school is required to immediately enroll the child or youth, even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. Parents/guardians may be required to submit contact information.
2. The last school attended must be contacted to obtain records.
3. If the child or youth lacks immunizations or immunization/medical records, the enrolling school **MUST** refer the parent/guardian to the liaison in order to get help obtaining immunizations and records.

**STUDENTS****5118.1a****Homeless Students****VIII. PRIVACY**

1. Schools must treat information about a homeless child or youth living situation as a student education record subject to all protections of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
2. Such information shall not be deemed to be directory information.

**IX. DISTRICT LIAISON FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS**

The district's homeless liaison is the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, located at 100 South Turnpike Road, Wallingford, CT 06492. Contact telephone number is: 203-294-5946.

The duties of the local liaison are:

1. Ensure homeless children or youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies and entities.
2. Ensure homeless children or youths are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school district's schools, including ensuring that such homeless children or youths have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as other students.
3. Ensure that homeless families, children or youths receive educational services for which such families, children and youths are eligible, including intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, special education services, and preschool programs administered by the District.
4. Ensure that parents/guardians of homeless children or youths are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, including extracurricular activities, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children or youths are disseminated where such children and youths receive services in locations frequented by parents/guardians of such children or youths and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens in a manner and form understandable to parents/guardians of homeless children or youths and unaccompanied youths.

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6. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children or youths under the McKinney-Vento Act is disseminated in locations frequented by parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth in a manner and form that is understandable to them.
7. Ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the McKinney Vento Act, including carrying out the initial dispute resolution process and ensuring that homeless students are immediately enrolled pending resolution of any enrollment dispute.
8. Ensure that parent/guardians of homeless children or youths and unaccompanied youths are informed of all transportation services, including to and from the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing those services.
9. Ensure that homeless children or youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services.
10. Assist homeless unaccompanied youths in placement/enrollment decisions, including considering the youth's wishes in those decisions, and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal such decisions.
11. Assist homeless children or youths in enrolling in school and accessing school services and removing barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees, fines or absences.
12. Inform parent/guardians of homeless children or youth, school personnel, and others of the rights of such children or youth.
13. Assist homeless children or youths who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
14. Collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless students.
15. Indicate that a homeless student or his/her immediate family is eligible to participate in a local District program and authorized to affirm such individual/family for the HUD Homeless Assistance Program. (This qualification can be done provided the District Liaison has received the mandatory training.)

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16. Provide the State Coordinator the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data need to fulfill the federally required data collection.
17. Collaborate with and participate in professional development and technical assistance activities, as offered by the office of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.
18. Ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless students receive professional development and other support and that unaccompanied youths:
  - a. are enrolled in school;
  - b. have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards the State has established for other students; and
  - c. are informed of their status as independent youths under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087VV) and that such youth may obtain assistance from the District to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
19. Coordinate special education services for homeless students identified as eligible within the local District.
20. Ensure that high school age homeless students receive assistance from counselors to advise such students on preparation and readiness for college or career.
21. Provide any homeless student, who is not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian (an "unaccompanied youth") full access to his/her educational records, including medical records, in the District's possession.

**Legal References:** Connecticut General Statutes

- 10-186 – Duties of local and regional boards of education re school attendance. Hearings. Appeals to the state board. Establishment of hearing board.
- 10-253 - School privilege for children in certain placements, nonresident children and children in temporary shelters.

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