

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

HOMELESS STUDENTS

5.14*

- I. Children and youth in this school district who experience homelessness, including those not currently enrolled due to homelessness, shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education as provided to other children and youths, and other services needed to ensure an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic achievement standards to which all students are held, and to participate fully in the district's academic and extracurricular activities.
- II. The District shall remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in a qualified school; and:
 - A. Identify homeless children and youth;
 - B. Immediately enroll homeless children and youth;
 - C. Provide access for homeless children to public preschool programs administered by the School District;
 - D. Provide appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by homeless children and youth while attending a prior school;
 - E. Provide access for homeless children and youth to academic and extracurricular activities; and
 - F. Coordinate School District programs and collaborate with other school districts community service providers and organizations, including:
 1. Local social services and other community agencies to provide support to homeless students and their families;
 2. Other school districts regarding homeless student-related transportation, transfer of school records, and other inter-district activities, as needed; and
 3. Housing authorities and Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

III. Definitions

A. Homeless Child or Youth

An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who are:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer, designed to provide temporary living accommodations, abandoned in hospitals, or not in the physical custody of a parent;
4. Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
5. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or
6. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in III.A.1. through III.A.5.

B. Unaccompanied Homeless Youth – A child or youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

C. School of Origin – The school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school where the child or youth was last enrolled, including preschool.

D. Enroll and Enrollment – Attending school and participating fully in school activities.

E. Immediate – Without delay.

F. Parent – Parent or guardian of a student.

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

- G. Liaison – The staff person designated by the District as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
 - H. Eligible School – The school of origin, the school zoned for the address where the student is temporarily residing, or another school with students residing in that attendance zone is eligible to attend.
 - I. Designated receiving school includes the next level school, elementary from prekindergarten, middle from elementary, high from middle, that a homeless child or youth, whose homelessness continues into the next school year, may attend when that next level school is in the district designated school for those students in the homeless student’s school of origin. When more than one school is designated to receive students from the prior level, then the school district will determine to which of the designated receiving schools the student will be assigned.
- IV. The School District shall designate an appropriate staff person able to carry out the duties described in the McKinney-Vento Act, as the School District’s liaison for homeless children and youth.
 - V. The District shall assure children and youth shall not be stigmatized, segregated, or separated in any educational program on the basis of their homeless status.
 - VI. The School District shall identify homeless students as defined by federal and state law. If the School District’s liaison for homeless children and youth determines that the minor is an unaccompanied homeless youth, the liaison shall issue to the youth a certificate documenting his/ her status as required by law.
 - VII. The School District shall ensure the immediate enrollment of homeless students even if the child or youth: is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as:
 - A. Previous academic records;
 - B. Immunizations or other health records;
 - C. Birth certificate;
 - D. Proof of residency;
 - E. Guardianship;
 - F. Uniform or dress code requirements;
 - G. Outstanding fees, fines, or absences; or
 - H. Other required documentation

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

- VIII. The School District shall assist homeless children to provide documentation to meet state and local requirements for entry into school.
- IX. A homeless child shall be given a temporary exemption to provide proof of age, certification of a school-entry health examination, proof of immunization, and other documentation required for enrollment.
- X. The School District shall ensure the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth and assures that:
- A. A homeless child or youth may continue their education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year;
 - B. Keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is presumed to be 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;
 - C. When considering a placement in a school other than the child's or youth's school of origin, the district will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student's best interest;
 - D. The eligible school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth missed an application or enrollment deadline during any period of homelessness;
 - E. When a school other than the school of origin is selected, the district will remove barriers to enrollment and enroll homeless children and youths immediately, even if they cannot produce records or otherwise meet enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- XI. Each homeless student shall be provided the services that are comparable to services offered to non-homeless students in their school including the following:
- A. Transportation services;
 - B. School nutrition programs;
 - C. Programs for gifted and talented students;
 - D. Programs in career and technical education;
 - E. Preschool programs administered by the district; and
 - F. Educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria;
 - Title I;
 - Exceptional Student Education (ESE); and
 - educational programs for English learners.

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

- XII. Homeless students shall be given meaningful opportunities to succeed in school.
- XIII. Homeless students shall continue their education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year.
- XIV. Homeless students shall be allowed to remain in the school of origin presumed to be 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.
 - A. When considering placement in a school other than the child's or youth's school of origin, the School District shall consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is the student's best interest;
 - B. The eligible school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth missed an application or enrollment deadline during any period of homelessness; and
 - C. When a school other than the school of origin is selected, the School District shall remove barriers to enrollment and enroll homeless children and youths immediately, even if they cannot produce records or otherwise meet enrollments requirements.
- XV. The School District shall ensure that homeless students, who become permanently housed during the academic year, may remain at their school of origin for the remainder of the academic year and continue to receive all McKinney-Vento Act benefits.
- XVI. Children and youths experiencing homelessness, and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, will have access to all available academic and extracurricular activities for which they meet relevant eligibility criteria.
- XVII. Unaccompanied homeless high school youth shall receive counseling to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education.
- XVIII. Transportation to and from a child's or youth's school of origin shall be provided or arranged at the request of the parent or guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied child or youth, the School District's designated liaison for homeless children and youth.

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

- XIX. When the child's or youth's living arrangements are in an area served by another school district (district of residence), the school district of service will coordinate with the district of residence to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child or youth with transportation to and from school of origin.
- XX. The School District shall ensure homeless students' records shall be:
- A. treated as a student education record, and shall not be deemed to be directory information, under Section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act;
 - B. maintained for each homeless child or youth, including:
 - 1. Immunization or other required health records;
 - 2. Birth certificates;
 - 3. Academic records;
 - 4. Guardianship records; and
 - 5. Evaluations for special services;
 - C. Made available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school; and
 - D. Held confidential in a manner consistent with Section 444 of the General Education Provision Act.
- XXI. Homeless students and/ or parents shall have the right to dispute school assignment if placement is other than the school of origin. The School District shall ensure that unaccompanied youth and the parents of homeless students are notified of the right to remain in the school of origin and of the dispute process.
- A. When the School District determines that a placement other than the school of origin is in the best interest, the School District shall provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth with:
 - 1. A written explanation;
 - 2. In a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth; and
 - 3. Information on the right to appeal the placement determination;
 - B. If a dispute arises over eligibility, or school selection or enrollment in a school the child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals;

CHAPTER 5.00 – STUDENTS

- C. The parent or guardian of the child or youth or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth shall be provided with a written explanation of any decision related to school selection or enrollment made by the school, that local educational agency, or the State educational agency involved, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions;
 - D. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the School District's designated homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible; and
 - E. In the case of unaccompanied youth, the liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in the school in which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of such dispute.
- XXII. The School District shall follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Florida Statutes.
- XXIII. Any record ordinarily kept by the school, including health and immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs of a homeless student shall be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when the student enters a new school district.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 1001.41, 1001.42, 1003.21, F.S.

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MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT, P.L.100-77

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