

P5120 EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

BOARD POLICY:

The Board of Education possesses a strong commitment to ensuring that homeless children and youth receive a meaningful opportunity to enroll and attend all public schools in the district. The Wichita Public Schools Office of the Homeless Liaison acts as a resource center for all school personnel facing questions related to homeless children and youth.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11435 *et. seq.*, requires that all schools provide homeless students with immediate access to education, even if the child lacks school records, a birth certificate, medical/immunization documents, or proof of residency.

Administrative Implemental Procedures:

1. Identification. Each student who attempts to enroll in Wichita Public Schools will complete an enrollment residency questionnaire. This form will help identify students for referral to the Office of the Homeless Liaison.
2. Enrollment. A homeless child need not provide a birth certificate, shot records, proof of residence, or a social security card to begin attending school. In addition, homeless children have the right to stay in their “school of origin” for the entire time that they are homeless. They also may remain in their school of origin until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing.
3. Admission: Specific Procedures. USD 259 will serve each homeless student according to the student’s best interest and will continue the student’s education in the “school of origin” for the duration of the school year or enroll the student in any public school associated with the attendance area for the place where the student is actually living.
4. Unaccompanied Youth. Unaccompanied youth must be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves in conjunction with the district liaison or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or liaison. The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Such young people may include those who: were asked to leave home by a parent; left home with the consent of a parent; have no formal custody papers or arrangements while their parents are in jail, the hospital, or a rehabilitation center; or ran away from home. Youth who are living on their own cannot be kept out of school.
5. Early Childhood Homelessness. The liaison shall identify homeless children who are five years or younger. Pre-school aged homeless children are automatically eligible to attend preschool programs funded under Title I.
6. Full Access. USD 259 schools may not segregate homeless students in separate schools, separate programs or separate settings within schools, except as necessary to provide temporary, special and supplemental services. Homeless children have the right to equal access to public preschool, Head Start, Even Start, and before and after-school care programs.
7. Transportation. For transportation services, “homeless student” includes enrolled preschool students. If the homeless student’s school of origin and temporary housing are located in USD 259, the district will provide transportation to and from the school of origin, or the

school associated with their current place of residence, at the request of the parent, guardian, or homeless liaison, provided it is in the best interest of the student. If the student's temporary housing is outside the attendance area of the school of origin, then the district will work with the school of origin to agree on a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for transporting the child. If an agreement cannot be reached, the costs will be shared equally.

8. **School Meals.** Homeless students are eligible for free Child Nutrition Program benefits under the federal McKinney-Vento Act. The determination of a child meeting the definition of "homeless" is made by the district's homeless liaison. The documentation needed to provide free meals consists of the child's name or a list of names, effective date(s), and the signature of the homeless liaison; when this information is provided by the liaison to Nutrition Services, free meal status will be given.
9. **Uniform or Dress Code Requirements.** No homeless child shall face enrollment delays, or be asked to wait to attend classes, based on the absence of a uniform.
10. **Student/Teacher Interactions.** A teacher must not penalize a child for lacking adequate supplies or clothing. All conversations between student and teacher should occur in a confidential manner.
11. **Student/Staff Interactions.** Staff members, such as clerical and secretarial personnel, must pay particular attention to the educational challenges facing homeless children and youth. USD 259 considers it mandatory that administration, clerical, secretarial, counselors, social workers and/or other office staff receive adequate training in recognizing the issues related to homelessness and treating students appropriately.
12. **Discipline.** Homeless students are generally subject to the same disciplinary standards as other students; however, disciplinary sanctions must not be imposed for code of conduct violations related to tardiness, absences, or apparel concerns, to the extent these violations result from the student's homeless situation. USD 259 schools must notify the homeless liaison whenever parent or legal guardian cannot be contacted when disciplinary sanctions will result in the suspension or expulsion of a homeless student, and provide an opportunity for the homeless liaison to participate in associated disciplinary hearings.
13. **Dispute Resolution.** Under federal law, if a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the homeless child or youth must be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.
14. **Administrative Procedures & Guidelines.** Each building will have a designee that shall review, be familiar with, and refer to, the Administrative Procedures & Guidelines for specific policy and procedures in the administration and education of homeless children and youth.

Administrative Responsibility: Title Services

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New Policy: June 2009