



STUDENTS

Enrollment Rights and Services for Homeless Students

A. Definitions

1. Homeless students are defined as students who:
 - (a) lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and
 - (b) includes children and youth who:
 - (i) are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - (ii) are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - (iii) are living in emergency or transitional shelters;
 - (iv) are abandoned in hospitals or other Safe Haven locations;
 - (v) have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation;
 - (vi) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or
 - (vii) migratory children who are living in circumstances described in (i) through (iii).

“Substandard housing” may be determined by considering factors such as whether the setting in which the child or youth is living lacks water, electricity, or heat; is infested with vermin or mold; lacks a working kitchen or toilet, or presents unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities.

Considerations of the relative permanence or adequacy of living arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis.

2. **“Unaccompanied youth”** means a student not in physical custody of a parent/guardian and includes students living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act](#).
3. **“School of origin”** means the school or preschool that a student attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled. When a student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.
4. **“Best interest determination”** means that the district must make school placement decisions for homeless students and youths on the basis of their best interest, as determined by student-centered factors including impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety. Priority should be given to the request of the child or the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth. Placement of siblings should also be considered.

5. **“Excess cost of transportation”** means the additional cost the district spends to transport a homeless student to school, for activities or support outside of the normal school day. For example, there is no excess cost of transportation if the district provides transportation to a homeless student for the student’s normal school day. If the district provides additional transportation to a homeless student that is not part of a regular bus route and not covered by the state transportation funding formula (e.g., to and/or from extra-curricular activities, to and/or from summer school), the entire cost would be considered excess cost of transportation. The district may use McKinney-Vento sub grant funds and Title I, Part A funds to defray excess cost of transportation for homeless students.

B. Identification of Homeless Students

The district will:

1. Use a housing questionnaire in its enrollment process. The questionnaire will be distributed to all students so as to avoid stigmatizing homeless students and their families;
2. Ensure that referral forms used to identify and support homeless students are accessible and easy to use;
3. Include its homeless liaison’s contact information on its website;
4. Provide materials for homeless students and parents/guardians, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in a language they can understand;
5. As practicable, provide annual guidance for school staff on the definition of homelessness, signs of homelessness, the impact of homelessness on students and steps to take when a potentially homeless student is identified, including how to connect the student with appropriate housing and support service providers;
6. Develop interagency partnerships to serve homeless families and students; and
7. Work with the state homelessness coordinator to facilitate services to families and students made homeless by natural disasters or other catastrophic events.

On an annual basis, the superintendent or designee will:

- Strongly encourage district staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers, to annually review the SafeSchools video on identification of student homelessness;
- Strongly encourage every district-designated homeless student liaison to attend trainings provided by the state on identifying and serving homeless youth;
- Ensure that the district includes in materials provided to students at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment, information about services and support for homeless students (i.e., the brochure posted on the **Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)** website); and
- Use a variety of communications each year to notify students and families about services and support available to them if they experience homelessness (e.g., distributing and collecting an annual housing intake survey, providing parent brochures directly to students and families, announcing the information at school wide assemblies, and posting information on the district’s website).

C. Placement and Enrollment of Homeless Students

The district will make a school placement decision for a homeless student on the basis of the student's best interest.

1. When deciding placement:
 - a. Presume that allowing the homeless student to remain in their school of origin is in the student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth; and
 - b. Make a best interest determination based on factors such as the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian. If the best interest determination is requested by an unaccompanied youth, the process will consider the views of the youth.
2. After conducting a best interest determination, provide to the parent/guardian of the student or to the unaccompanied youth in a timely manner, and in a language they can understand, a written explanation of the placement decision and the right to appeal the decision (see Dispute Resolution Process below).
3. Pending resolution of disputes over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, immediately enroll a homeless student in the school in which the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth seeks enrollment.
4. Avoid delay or denial of enrollment, even if they have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness or are unable to produce records required for enrollment (e.g., previous academic records, immunization records, health records, proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certificates, mailing address). Additionally, enrollment of homeless students may not be delayed or denied due to fees, fines, or absences at a previous school.
5. Avoid requirements for student contact information to be in a form or manner that creates a barrier for enrolling homeless students.
6. Provide transportation for homeless students to their school or preschool of origin. Once the student has obtained permanent housing, the district will continue to provide such transportation until the end of the academic year. If the homeless student remains in their school of origin but begins living in an area served by another district, the district of origin and the district in which the homeless student is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for the student's transportation to and from their school of origin. If the districts cannot reach agreement, the responsibility and costs for transportation will be shared equally.
7. Continue to provide transportation to their school of origin pending the outcome of enrollment or transportation disputes.
8. Immediately contact the school last attended by the homeless student to obtain relevant academic and other records pursuant to district policies.

Attendance options will be made available to homeless families on the same terms as family's resident to the district, including attendance rights acquired by living in geographic attendance areas, other student assignment policies, and intra- and inter-district choice options.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student will be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, and in compliance with the state's Address Confidentiality Program when necessary. However, the district cannot demand emergency contact information in a form or manner that creates a barrier to enrollment and/or attendance at school.

Facilitating On-Time Grade Level Progression for Homeless Students

The district will:

- 1) Waive specific courses required for graduation for students who are homeless if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district; or
- 2) Provide reasonable justification for denial of the waiver.

In the event the district denies a waiver and the homeless student would have qualified to graduate from their sending school district, the district will provide an alternative means of obtaining required coursework so that the student may graduate on time.

The district will consolidate partial credit, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and will provide homeless students with opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.

For homeless students who have been unable to complete an academic course and receive full credit due to withdrawal or transfer, the district will grant partial credit for coursework completed before the date of the withdrawal or transfer. When the district receives a transfer student in these circumstances, it will accept the student's partial credits, apply them to the student's academic progress or graduation or both, and allow the student to earn credits regardless of the student's date of enrollment in the district.

In the event a homeless student is transferring at the beginning of or during their junior or senior year of high school and is ineligible to graduate after all alternatives have been considered, the district will work with the sending district to ensure the awarding of a diploma from the sending district if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.

In the event a homeless student enrolled in three (3) or more school districts as a high school student, has met state requirements, has transferred to the district, but is ineligible to graduate from the district after all alternatives have been considered, the district will waive its local requirements and ensure that the student receives a diploma.

D. District's Homeless Liaison

The superintendent will designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the district's McKinney-Vento liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison may simultaneously serve as a coordinator for other federal programs, provided that they are able to carry out the duties as prescribed by the law.

The principal of each elementary, middle, and high school building will establish a point of contact responsible for identifying homeless and unaccompanied youth and connecting them with the district's homeless student liaison. The district's homeless student liaison is responsible for training the building points of contact.

The district's liaison will ensure that:

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination of activities with other entities and agencies;
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school;
3. Homeless families and students receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, ECEAP, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the district, as well as referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services;
4. Homeless students are identified and provided proper access to free school meals;
5. The parent/guardians of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
6. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated where such children receive services (e.g., schools, family shelters, service agencies);
7. If there is a dispute over eligibility, enrollment, transportation, or student service, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought and/or provided the transportation or service sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth will be informed of the district's decision and reasons therefore and of their appeal rights in writing and in a language they can understand. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy, in accordance with section E, Dispute Resolution;
8. The parents/guardians of a homeless student, and any unaccompanied youth, are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin and are assisted in accessing transportation to school;
9. Unaccompanied students are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state established for other students, are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) ([20 U.S.C. 1087vv](#)) for federal student aid purposes, and their right to receive verification of this status from the homeless liaison;
10. Barriers that prevent homeless students from receiving credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school are identified and removed;
11. Affirm whether homeless students meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to qualify them for HUD homeless assistance programs and refer homeless families and students to housing and other services;

12. Assist parent/guardians and unaccompanied youth in obtaining immunizations, health screenings, guardianship records and other documents normally required for enrollment; and
13. Assist unaccompanied youth in connecting with needed supports such as housing assistance, health care and other services.

The district's liaison for homeless students and their families will coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where such children and youth receive services under the [McKinney-Vento Act](#), such as schools, family shelters and service agencies. The notice must be disseminated in a manner and form that parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth receiving such services can understand, including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in their **native primary** language. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students and will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined by the state-level (OSPI) coordinator for homeless children and youth programs.

The district will inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the district homeless liaison.

Food and Nutrition Services

A student who is homeless and is attending any school in the district is automatically eligible for free breakfast and lunch.

In addition to the duties and responsibilities listed above, the district liaison will work to improve systems to identify homeless students and coordinate with the district's nutrition program to ensure that each homeless student has proper access to free school meals, and that applicable accountability and reporting requirements are satisfied.

Informed Consent for Health Care

As allowed by [RCW 7.70.065\(2\)](#), a homeless student liaison, school nurse, or school counselor is authorized to provide consent for health care for a minor student when:

- Consent is necessary for non-emergency, outpatient, primary care services, including physical, vision, hearing, and dental examinations, eyeglasses, hearing aids, immunizations, treatment for illnesses and conditions, and routine follow-up care customarily provided by a health care provider in an outpatient setting, excluding elective surgeries;
- The student is homeless as defined by [McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001](#); and
- The student is not under the supervision or control of a parent, custodian, or legal guardian, and is not in the care and custody of the department of social and health services.

Upon the request by a health care facility or a health care provider, a district employee authorized to consent to care must provide to the person rendering care a signed and dated declaration stating under penalty of perjury that the employee is a school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison and that the minor patient meet the requirements of [RCW 7.70.065](#) (2) (b) listed above in this procedure. Any declaration required by a health care facility or a health care provider described above must include written notice that the district employee is exempt from administrative sanctions and civil liability resulting from the consent or non-consent for care or payment for care. See Verification of Status as an Unaccompanied Homeless Child or Youth and Authorization for Health Care Services, pages 10 – 11.

The district and district employee authorized to consent to care under this procedure will not be subject to administrative sanctions or civil damages resulting from the consent or non-consent for care, any care, or payment for care.

Transportation

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student or will divide the costs equally.

E. Dispute Resolution Process

The district will ensure that the student attends the school in which they sought enrollment while the dispute resolution process is being carried out.

1. Notification of Appeal Process

If the district seeks to place a homeless student in a school other than the school of origin, or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the district shall inform the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth of the right to appeal. The district will provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with written notice which includes:

- a. An explanation of the decision regarding the student's eligibility for homeless services and school placement;
- b. Contact information for the district and the OSPI (**Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction**) homeless liaison, including a description of their roles;
- c. Notification of the right to appeal the district's decision;
- d. Notification of the right to enroll in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute;
- e. A description of the dispute resolution process including a petition form that can be returned to the school to initiate the process and timelines; and
- f. A summary of the federal legislation governing placement of homeless students ([McKinney-Vento Act](#)).

2. Appeal to the District Liaison – Level I

If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the district's eligibility or placement decision, they may appeal by filing a written request for dispute resolution with the school, the district's homeless liaison or designee. If submitted to the school, it will be immediately forwarded to the homeless liaison. The request for dispute resolution must be submitted by the parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth to the district's homeless liaison within fifteen (15) business days of receiving notification of the district's eligibility or placement decision.

The district homeless liaison must log their receipt of the complaint, including the date and time, with a written description of the situation and the reason for the dispute.

- a. A copy of the complaint must be forwarded to the liaison's immediate supervisor and the district superintendent;
- b. Within five (5) business days of their receipt of the complaint, the district homeless liaison must provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written decision and notification of the right to appeal in a language they can understand;
- c. The district will verify receipt of the Level I decision; and
- d. If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth wishes to move the dispute resolution process forward to Level II, the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth will notify the district's homeless liaison of their intent to appeal within ten (10) business days of receipt of notification of the Level I decision. The district's homeless liaison will then provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with an appeals packet containing:
 - i. A copy of the parent's/guardian's or unaccompanied youth's complaint filed with the district's homeless liaison at Level I;
 - ii. The decision rendered at Level I; and
 - iii. Any additional information submitted by the parent/guardian, unaccompanied youth, and/or homeless liaison.

3. Appeal to the District Superintendent – Level II

The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth may appeal the district liaison's decision to the superintendent or designee using the appeals package provided at Level I.

- a. The superintendent or designee will arrange for a personal conference to be held with the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth within five (5) business days of receiving the Level I appeals package. **This meeting may be held over video or phone conference if required due to a school building closure or if the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth is unable to attend in person, provided the same opportunity for appeal is given and the same rights are provided to the family or youth;**
- b. Within five (5) business days of the conference with the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth the superintendent will provide that individual with a written decision with supporting evidence and notification of their right to appeal to **the** OSPI;
- c. The district will verify receipt of the Level II decision;

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- d. A copy of the superintendent's decision will be forwarded to the district's homeless liaison; and
 - e. If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal to **the** OSPI, notification must be provided to the district homeless liaison within ten (10) business days of receipt of the Level II decision.
4. Appeal to **the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)** – Level III
- a. The district superintendent or designee will forward a copy of the Level II decision and all written documentation to the OSPI homeless liaison within five (5) days of rendering a decision. The district will submit the entire dispute package to **the** OSPI in one (1) complete package by U.S. mail;
 - b. The OSPI homeless education coordinator or designee, along with the appropriate agency director, and/or agency assistant superintendent, will make a final decision within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the appeal;
 - c. The **OSPI** decision **from OSPI** will be forwarded to the district's homeless liaison. The liaison will distribute the decision to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth and the district superintendent;
 - d. The **OSPI** decision **from OSPI** will be the final resolution for placement of a homeless child or youth in the district; and
 - e. The district will retain the record of all disputes, at each level, related to the placement of homeless students.

Inter-District Disputes

If districts are unable to resolve a dispute regarding the placement of a homeless student, either district may submit a written request to OSPI seeking resolution.

OSPI will resolve the dispute within ten (10) business days of notification of the dispute and inform all interested parties of the decision.

Cross reference: [Board Policy 3115](#)

Enrollment Rights and Services for
Homeless Students

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VERIFICATION OF STATUS AS AN UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILD OR YOUTH AND AUTHORIZATION FOR HEALTH CARE SERVICES

For students under the age of majority

Unaccompanied homeless child or youth seeking health care services:

Name	
Date of Birth	
Contact Information	
Service Provider	

Individual certifying the status of the child or youth and authorizing access to health care services:

Name	
Title	
District and School	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the minor identified above seeking care: (1) meets the definition of a homeless child or youth under the federal McKinney-Vento program; and (2) is not under the supervision of a parent, custodian, or legal guardian and is not in the care and custody of the Department of Social and Health Services. I further declare that I am a homeless student liaison, school nurse, or school counselor.

Additionally, this form provides written notification to you that pursuant to [RCW 7.70.065](#), I and my employing school/district are not liable for any care or payment for any care rendered provided to this unaccompanied homeless child or youth.

EXECUTED at Everett, Washington.

Signature

Date

Adopted: October 2017

[RCW 7.70.065](#)

- (1) A school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison is authorized to provide informed consent for health care, including mental health care, for a patient under the age of majority when:
 - (a) Consent is necessary for nonemergency outpatient primary care services, including physical examinations, vision examinations and eyeglasses, dental examinations, hearing examinations, and hearing aids, immunizations, treatments for illnesses and conditions, and routine follow-up care customarily provided by a health care provider in an outpatient setting, excluding elective surgeries;
 - (b) The minor patient meets the definition of a **"homeless child or youth"** under the federal McKinney-Vento homeless education assistance improvements act of 2001, P.L. 107-110, January 8, 2002, (115 Stat. 2005); and
 - (c) The minor patient is not under the supervision or control of a parent, custodian, or legal guardian, and is not in the care and custody of the Department of Social and Health Services.
- (2) A person consenting to care under this section and the person's employing school or school district are not subject to administrative sanctions or civil damages resulting from the consent or non-consent for care, any care, or payment for any care, rendered pursuant to this section
- (3) Upon request by a health care facility or a health care provider, a person authorized to consent to care must provide to the person rendering care a declaration signed and dated under penalty of perjury pursuant to [RCW 9A.72.085](#) stating that the person is a school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison and that the minor patient meets the requirements of this section. The declaration must also include written notice of the exemption from liability under this section.

Adopted: October 2017

ⁱThe McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason
- Children and youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc.)
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- Migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations