

MAGNOLIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MPS) HOMELESS EDUCATION POLICY

I. Introduction

Title IA (Section 111(a)(1)) requires that a district (including independent charter schools) receiving Title IA Funds include in its district plan a plan to provide services to homeless students to ensure compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in December 2001, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act was reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which was signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015.

II. Definitions

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youths who (42 USC 11434(a)):

- 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; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- 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;
- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Runaway children or children who are abandoned; and
- Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

Unaccompanied youth includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. A child or unaccompanied youth shall be considered homeless for as long as he/she is in a living situation described above.

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the Homeless Liaison.

III. Homeless Liaison

The **Principal** of each MPS school site shall serve as the Homeless Liaison for homeless students ((42 USC 11432(g)(1)(J) & (e)(3)(C).)

The Homeless Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)):

- Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- Homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at MPS.

- Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs.
- Parents/guardians 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.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places where children receive services, such as schools, shelters, and soup kitchens.
- Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, the MPS charter, and Board policy.
- Parents/guardians are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
- The School Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.

For any homeless student who enrolls at the School, a copy of the School's complete policy shall be provided at the time of enrollment and at least twice annually.

IV. General Assurances

MPS provides the following general assurances:

- Homeless children and youth shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way.
- Homeless children and youth shall be provided services comparable to those received by other students in the school, including transportation services, and education programs for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title 1 or similar state and local programs; programs for students with disabilities; programs for students with limited English proficiency; vocational or technical programs; gifted and talented programs; and school nutrition programs.
- Homeless children and youth will have access to district administrative level reservation of funds (set-asides) for serving homeless students.
- MPS shall provide homeless students with access to education and other services necessary for these students to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students.
- MPS shall provide and post notices of the educational rights of homeless children and youth.

V. Identification and Reporting

Homeless children and youth will be identified through:

1. The application process for enrollment (self-identification)
2. School personnel recommendations
3. Coordinated activities with other entities and agencies

MPS will comply with all federal, state, county, and other data collections and reporting requirements regarding homeless children and youth.

VI. School Selection

Homeless students have a right to select from the following schools:

- The school he/she attended when permanently housed (School of Origin)
- The school in which he/she was last enrolled (School of Origin)
- The school in the attendance area in which the student currently resides (School of Residency)

A homeless child or youth's right to attend their school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness. If a child or youth becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he or she is entitled to stay in the school of origin for the remainder of the academic year.

As all MPS schools are independent charter schools, and therefore schools of choice rather than assigned district schools, placement decisions are based solely on parent request through the application process. In order to provide equal access to its schools, the MPS annual student recruitment plan shall include efforts to reach homeless families, children, and youth via free public events, community centers, and local homeless service providers. Homeless students may also be identified at the time of enrollment (through self-reports).

VII. Enrollment and Records

Homeless youth will not be discriminated against in the application process. Homeless children and youth will be allowed to apply for enrollment in accordance with current MPS enrollment policies even if the parent/guardian is unable to provide the school with the records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, birth certificate, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation. The MPS 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 designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the homeless liaison. The liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall assist in the enrollment process. Unaccompanied youth shall be immediately enrolled if space is available even if unable to provide the school with the records normally required for enrollment(as above), and despite lack of parent or legal guardian's supervision or permissions, or "power of attorney" by supervising adult.

In accordance with current MPS enrollment policies and state regulations regarding charter schools, if the grade level for which a homeless child or youth has applied has more applicants than spaces available, a random public lottery will take place once annually in order to determine enrollment for the following school year. An "in-district" priority will apply during the lottery to homeless youth who self-identify as homeless during the lottery application process as to not discriminate against homeless children or youth due to lack of permanent housing. If a homeless child or youth applies for admission after the annual random public lottery, he or she will be placed on the waitlist in the order in which the application was received, even if the application is incomplete at the time of submission.

Any confidential record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, of each homeless child or youth will be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school or school district.

VIII. Nutrition Programs

Homeless students automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch at MPS schools. Families do not have to fill out an application or provide proof of income. Homeless students will be added to the free meals program as soon as they have been identified.

IX. Transportation

Per the McKinney-Vento Act, LEAs must provide services to homeless children/youth that are comparable to those received by other students in the school selected, including transportation. In addition, schools must provide transportation for homeless students to and from their school of origin, if feasible.

MPS, where feasible, applicable, at the request of the parent/guardian and/or in the best interest of the homeless children and youth shall provide transportation to students experiencing homelessness to ensure the students are able to stay at the MPS school of their choice for the duration of their homelessness.

MPS may work with the youth's district of residence or other agencies to provide transportation services.

X. Enrollment Dispute Resolution Process

(per CDE Homeless Education Dispute Resolution Process -<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/disputeres.asp>)

If a disagreement arises over school selection or enrollment, the student must be immediately enrolled in the school in which he/she is requesting enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute. Enrollment is defined as "attending classes and participating fully in school activities."

The school must refer the student, parent, or guardian to the LEA's homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible. The homeless liaison must ensure the dispute resolution process is also followed for unaccompanied youth.

A written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment must be provided if a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth disputes such a school selection or enrollment decision, including the right to appeal. The written explanation shall be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language that the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand.

If the dispute remains unresolved at the district level or is appealed, then the district homeless liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the homeless liaison at the county office of education (COE). The COE's homeless liaison will review these materials and determine the school selection or enrollment decision within five (5) working days of receipt of the materials. The COE homeless liaison will notify the LEA and parent of the decision.

If the dispute remains unresolved or is appealed, the COE homeless liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the State Homeless Coordinator. Upon the review of the LEA, COE, and parent information, the CDE will notify the parent of the final school selection or enrollment decision within ten (10) working days of receipt of materials.