

# PALISADES CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

*Empowering Educational Excellence.*

## **Education for Homeless Children and Youth Policy**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Board of Trustees of Palisades Charter High School (hereafter *the Board*) believes that the identification of students experiencing homelessness is critical to improving the educational outcomes of these students and ensuring that they have access to the same free and appropriate public education (FAPE) provided to other students within Palisades Charter High School (hereafter *PCHS*). PCHS shall provide students experiencing homelessness with access to education and other services necessary for such students to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students [42 U.S.C. § 11431].

Furthermore, the PCHS Board of Trustees desires to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness:

- are provided with equal access to its educational program
- have an opportunity to meet the same challenging California academic standards
- are provided a free and appropriate public education
- are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless
- are protected from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness

### **Definition of Homeless Children and Youth**

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

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
4. 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."

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



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## **PCHS Liaison Designation and Duties**

The Executive Director/Principal shall designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the PCHS homeless education liaison (hereafter *liaison*). The PCHS liaison shall fulfill the liaison duties specified in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (hereafter *McKinney-Vento Act*) to support the school identification, enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The PCHS liaison also shall fulfill the liaison duties specified in California Education Code, including those related to offering training at least annually to PCHS employees who provide services to students experiencing homelessness; this training shall include information about the PCHS's homeless education program policies and recognizing signs that a student is at risk of or experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A); Cal. Educ. Code § 48851.3(c)]

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## **Student Identification**

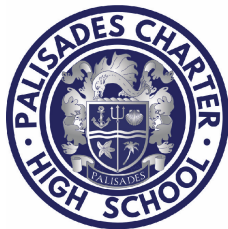
The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure PCHS identifies all students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, enrolled in the school. To ensure student identification, the Executive Director/Principal or designee shall annually provide and administer a housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians of students and all unaccompanied youth within PCHS. The housing questionnaire shall be based on best practices developed by the California Department of Education (CDE) and include an explanation of the rights and protections that children and youth experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, have (Cal. Educ. Code § 48851).

If the primary language of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth is not English, PCHS either shall make the housing questionnaire available in the parent's, guardian's, or unaccompanied youth's primary language or shall provide an appropriate translation of the housing questionnaire upon request by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth (Cal. Educ. Code § 48851).

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall collect completed housing questionnaires and report annually to CDE the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, enrolled in PCHS as identified using the housing questionnaire (Cal. Educ. Code § 48851).

## **Information Posting**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that the PCHS liaison's contact information and other information on homelessness (including, but not limited to, information regarding the educational rights and resources available to persons experiencing homelessness) are posted on the PCHS website. Additionally, PCHS will post the contact information of any school employee whose duties include assisting the liaison, if such an employee has been designated (Cal. Educ. Code § 48852.6).



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## **School Selection**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that school selection decisions (whether the local attendance area school or the school of origin, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Act) are made based on the student's best interest, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth. Student-centered best interest considerations shall include, but not be limited to, factors related to the impact of school mobility on the student's achievement, education, health, and safety, and ensuring the student has the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(B); Cal. Educ. Code § 48850].

## **Immediate Enrollment**

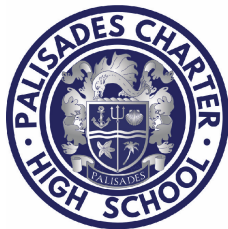
The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are enrolled immediately in PCHS (whether the local attendance area school or the school of origin, as defined in the federal McKinney-Vento Act) even if they are unable to produce records normally required for enrollment—such as previous academic records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation—or if they have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Enrollment is defined as “attending classes and participating fully in school activities” [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(i); 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(1)].

## **Transportation**

If deemed to be in a student's best interest to attend the school of origin, the Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), to and from the school of origin in keeping with the conditions outlined in the federal McKinney-Vento Act, including those regarding the provision of transportation to and from the school of origin across PCHS boundaries [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)].

## **Comparable Services**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that each child or youth experiencing homelessness is provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school, including transportation and educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria including, but not limited to, federal Title I services or similar state or local programs, educational programs for students with disabilities, educational programs for English learners, career and technical education programs, programs for gifted and talented students, and school nutrition programs [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4); Cal. Educ. Code § 48850].



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## **Prohibition Against Segregation or Stigmatization**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that students experiencing homelessness are not stigmatized in any way or segregated in a separate school or separate program within a school based on the student's status as homeless. The Executive Director/Principal or designee also shall ensure that services are not provided in settings within a school that segregate students experiencing homelessness from other students, except as necessary for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special, and supplementary services to meet the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(A); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(i); 42 U.S.C. § 11433(a)(2)(B)(ii)].

## **Student Privacy**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that information about the living situation of a student experiencing homelessness is treated as a student education record, and shall not be deemed to be directory information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(G)].

## **Professional Development and Technical Assistance**

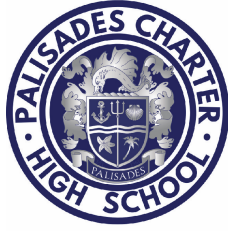
The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that the PCHS liaison and other appropriate PCHS personnel participate in homeless education training and other technical assistance activities as deemed appropriate by the CDE Office of the State Coordinator for Homeless Education at least annually. Such professional development and technical assistance shall include, but are not limited to, improving the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness, recognizing signs that a student is at risk of or experiencing homelessness, understanding terms related to the definitions of homelessness used by the U.S. Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development, understanding the PCHS's homeless education program policies, and understanding and meeting the specific needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. § 11432(d)(5); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(f)(6); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(ix); Cal. Educ. Code § 48851.3(c); Cal. Educ. Code § 48852.5].

## **Expanded High School Graduation Pathways**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall report annually to CDE the number of students experiencing homelessness graduating from the fourth or fifth year of high school who, for the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from PCHS-established graduation requirements that are in addition to statewide coursework requirements (Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1).

## **Local Control and Accountability Plans**

When there are at least 15 students experiencing homelessness in the PCHS, the local control and accountability plan (LCAP) shall include goals and specific actions to improve the student achievement and other outcomes of students experiencing homelessness (Cal. Educ. Code § 52052, 52060, 52064).



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## **Policy Review and Revision**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall review PCHS policies at least once every three years and recommend updates to ensure the removal of any barriers to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth. Any such review shall address the school identification, enrollment, and retention of these students, including the removal of educational barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. In reviewing and revising PCHS policies, consideration also shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship. [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(I); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(7)(B); 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6); Cal. Educ. Code § 48851.3(b)].

## **Dispute Resolution**

The Executive Director/Principal or designee shall ensure that disputes that arise over eligibility, school selection, or school enrollment are mediated and resolved in keeping with the conditions outlined in the federal McKinney-Vento Act and related CDE guidance [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)E)].

Approved by the Palisades Charter High School Board of Trustees on \_\_\_\_\_