

**Education for Homeless Children Policy**

*(For Board Approval on 8/30/2023)*

Health Sciences High and Middle College (HSHMC) recognizes the importance of the proper identification of students experiencing homelessness, including Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, and of ensuring that each identified student has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as other students. The school 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.

The Principal or designee shall review the school policy regarding Education for Homeless Children at least once every three years and recommend updates to ensure removal of any barriers to the education of homeless students and unaccompanied youth. Any such review shall address identification, enrollment, and retention of such students, including those barriers that are due to absences or outstanding fees or fines. (Education Code 48851.3, 42 USC 11432)

**I. Definition**

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition also includes:

* Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
* Children and youth who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters
* Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
* Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, or
* Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth are defined as a youth that is not in the custody of their parent or guardian and meet the definition of homelessness.

**II. Homeless Liaison**

The Principal shall designate an appropriate staff person to serve as a liaison for homeless children and youths. The liaison for homeless students shall fulfill the duties specified in 42 USC 11432 to assist in identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness to succeed in school, and as specified in Education Code 48851.3, 48851.5, and 48852.5 related to trainings for staff providing assistance to students experiencing homelessness. The duties of the liaison include ensuring that:

* Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
* Homeless children and youths are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed, at this school.
* Homeless children, youths, and their families have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible.
* Homeless children, youths, and their families receive referrals to services for health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other appropriate services.
* Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths in a manner and form understandable to them.
* Enrollment, school selection, and eligibility disputes are mediated according to the dispute resolution process.
* Homeless children, youths, and their families are provided with information on and assistance in accessing transportation.
* School personnel, including principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel, that provide services to homeless children, youths, and their families receive professional development and other support.
* Coordination occurs with state, community, and school personnel to provide education and related services to homeless children and youths.
* The school collects and provides to the State Coordinator reliable, valid, and comprehensive data regarding homeless education.

The Principal shall ensure that the 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 school web site.

**III. Identification**

The Principal shall ensure that the school identifies all students experiencing homelessness and unaccompanied youths enrolled at the school. (Education Code 48851)

To ensure easy identification of students experiencing homelessness, the Principal shall annually provide and administer a housing questionnaire developed by the California Department of Education (CDE) to all parents/guardians of students and all unaccompanied youths. (Education Code 48851)

If the primary language of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth is not English, either the housing questionnaire shall be made available in the primary language of the student's parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth pursuant to Education Code 48985, or an appropriate translation of the housing questionnaire shall be provided upon request of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. (Education Code 48851)

The Principal shall report to CDE the number of students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youths, enrolled in the school as identified from the housing questionnaire described above. (Education Code 48851)

**V. Immediate Enrollment and Dispute Resolution**

* The school will immediately identify, enroll and serve homeless children and youth, regardless of documentation. Enrollment means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
* If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment in a school, the school must:
  + - Immediately enroll the child or youth to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.
    - Provide written explanation to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth of the school’s decision, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decision.
    - Refer the youth, parent, or guardian to the liaison to carry out the dispute resolution as expeditiously as possible.
    - Ensure that an unaccompanied youth is immediately enrolled in school, pending resolution of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][3][E])

**IV. Services**

The school will ensure that placement decisions for students experiencing homelessness are based on the student's best interest as defined in law.

Each student experiencing homelessness will be provided services that are comparable to services offered to other students in the school, including, but not limited to, transportation, educational programs for which the student meets the eligibility criteria (such as federal Title I services or similar state or local programs, programs for students with disabilities, and educational programs for English learners), career and technical education programs, programs for gifted and talented students, and school nutrition programs. This also includes extra-curricular activities and sports. (Education Code 48850; 42 USC 11432)

Students experiencing homelessness shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way. However, students experiencing homelessness may be separated on school grounds as necessary for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special, and supplementary services to meet their unique needs. (42 USC 11432, 11433)

The Principal will ensure that information and/or materials for students experiencing homelessness are provided in a manner and form understandable to the student's parents/guardians and to unaccompanied youths.

Coursework, Credits and Graduation Requirements –

* When a homeless student transfers into another LEA, the LEA shall:
  + - Accept and issue full credit for any coursework that the student has satisfactory completed and shall not require the student to retake the course. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][1][F][ii]; *EC* Section 51225.2)
    - Issue partial credit for any coursework when the student did not complete the entire course, and allow the student to take the uncompleted portion. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][1][F][ii]; *EC* Section 51225.2)
* When a homeless student who has completed his/her second year of high school transfers to another high school, he/she shall be:
  + - Exempt from that school-established graduation requirements, unless the school finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements and graduate by the end of the fourth year. (*EC* Section 51225.1[a])
    - Notified by the school, along with educational rights’ holder, within 30 calendar days, of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for it. (*EC* Section 51225.1[d][2])

Information about the living situation of a student experiencing homelessness shall be considered part of a student's educational record, subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, shall not be deemed to be directory information as defined in 20 USC 1232g, and shall not be released without written consent. (42 USC 11432)

The school shall coordinate with other agencies and entities to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are promptly identified, ensure that students experiencing homelessness have access to and are in reasonable proximity to available education and related support services, and raise the awareness of school personnel and service providers of the effects of short-term stays in a shelter and other challenges associated with homelessness

**V. Professional Development**

At least annually, the liaison and other appropriate staff shall participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities to assist them in identifying and meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness. (Training may be available from CDE or SDCOE)

The homeless liaison shall:

* offer training at least annually related to
  + HSHMC’s homeless education program policies.
  + recognizing signs that pupils are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.
* offer the above training to certificated and classified employees providing services to pupils experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited to, teachers, support staff, and other school staff who work with pupils
* inform the above certificated and classified employees of the availability of training and the services the liaison provides to aid in the identification of and provision of services to pupils at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

**VI. Accountability**

At least annually, the Principal shall report to the Board on the identification of and outcomes for students experiencing homelessness. Based on the evaluation data, the school may revise its strategies as needed to more effectively identify and support the education of students experiencing homelessness.

Annually, the school shall report to CDE, in accordance with Education Code 51225.1, 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 school-established graduation requirements that are in addition to statewide coursework requirements.