
EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY

The Excel Academy Charter Schools (“EACS” or the “Charter School”) Governing Board desires to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational program, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic standards, are provided a free and appropriate public education, are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who: (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

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; or are abandoned in hospitals
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; and/or
4. Are 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 Charter School Liaison.

Charter School Liaison

The Executive Director designates the following staff person as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)):

Tamara Murphy
Title 1 Coordinator
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The Charter School Liaison shall ensure that the following requirements are fulfilled by the Charter School (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by Charter School personnel, through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies, and through the annual housing questionnaire administered by the Charter School.

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2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at the Charter School.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible including: services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act; early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”); any other preschool programs administered by the Charter School, if any; and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services
4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their students and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their students.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents/guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with the law, the Charter School’s charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. Charter School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. The Charter 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.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the Charter School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

The California Department of Education (“CDE”) publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>.

Enrollment

The Charter School shall immediately admit/enroll the student for which the Charter School is a School of Origin. “School of Origin” means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

EACS shall also immediately enroll a homeless youth who seeks to enroll in the Charter School, if the youth would otherwise be eligible to attend and subject to the Charter School’s capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School and Board policy. A homeless youth

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who is enrolled will have the right to attend classes and participate fully in school activities, including extracurricular activities.

The youth shall be immediately enrolled even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment (such as previous academic records, records of immunizations, other required health records, proof of residency) or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C); Education Code Section 48850(a)(3)(A).)

If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Executive Director or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the Charter School Liaison. The Charter School Liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C).)

A homeless youth may remain in the student's school of origin for the entire period for which the youth is homeless. If a youth obtains permanent housing during an academic year, the youth will be permitted to remain in the school of origin through the end of the academic year.

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over admissions/enrollment, the student shall be immediately admitted (subject to the Charter School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the school charter and Board policy), pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. The parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the admission/enrollment decision, including an explanation of the parent/guardian's right to appeal the decision. The parent/guardian shall also be referred to the Charter School Liaison. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The School Liaison shall carry out the board-adopted dispute resolution and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

Housing Questionnaire

EACS shall administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youth. EACS shall ensure that the housing questionnaire is based on the best practices developed by the CDE. EACS shall annually provide the housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians of students and to all unaccompanied youths at EACS.]The housing questionnaire shall be available in paper form. The housing questionnaire shall be available in the primary language other than English spoken by fifteen (15) percent or more of the students enrolled at EACS and shall be translated into other languages upon request of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. EACS shall collect the completed housing questionnaires and annually report to the CDE the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled. (Education Code Section 48851.) Twice annually, the EACS

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School Liaison shall notify all identified families an explanation of the rights and protections a student has as a homeless child or youth or as an unaccompanied youth.

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall promptly be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the Charter School such as (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)):

1. Transportation services
2. Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for students with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency
3. Programs in vocational and technical education
4. Programs for gifted and talented students
5. Charter School nutrition programs

Transportation

In the event that the Charter School provides transportation services to all students, the Charter School shall provide comparable transportation services to each homeless child or youth attending the Charter School, as noted above. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4).)

If the Charter School does not otherwise provide transportation services to all students, the Charter School shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from the Charter School, at the request of the parent or guardian (or Charter School Liaison), if the Charter School is the student's school of origin. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J) Transportation provided by the Charter School will be adequate and appropriate for the Student's situation, but the Charter School does not commit to any one method of transportation for all youth.

High School Graduation Requirements

Homeless students who transfer to the Charter School any time after the completion of their second year of high school shall be exempt from any of the Charter School's graduation requirements that are in excess of the California minimum graduation requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 ("additional graduation requirements") unless the Charter School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

To determine whether a homeless student is in their third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the student has earned to the date of transfer or the length of school enrollment may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date that a student who may qualify for exemption under the above requirements transfers into the Charter School, the Charter School shall notify the

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student, the student's educational rights holder, and the Charter School Liaison of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption.

The Charter School shall notify students who are exempted from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements and the student's educational rights holder of how any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institute, and provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

The Charter School shall not require any student who would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the Charter School to accept the exemption from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements or deny the student enrollment in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible. The Charter School shall not revoke an exemption and shall grant an eligible student's request for the exemption at any time if the student qualifies, regardless of whether the student previously declined the exemption. An eligible student's exemption from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements will continue to apply while the student is enrolled in the Charter School or if the student transfers to another school even after the student no longer meets the definition of a homeless child.

The Charter School shall not require or request that a student transfer schools in order to qualify the student for the exemption. Nor shall a student, a student's parent/guardian or educational rights holder, or a student's social worker or probation officer request a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements.

If a student who is exempted from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements completes the California minimum coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the Charter School, the Charter School shall not require or request that the student graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If the Charter School determines the student is reasonably able to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements by the end of the student's fifth year of high school, the Charter School shall do all of the following:

1. Inform the student of the student's option to remain at the Charter School for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements;
2. Inform the student and the educational rights holder for the student, about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution;
3. Provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; and
4. Permit the student to stay at the Charter School for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is

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eighteen (18) years of age or older, or, with the educational rights holder for the student, if the student is younger than eighteen years of age

Professional Development

All administrators, teachers and employees of the Charter School, including the Charter School Liaison, will be provided professional development on the identification, services, and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless children and youth. The Charter School Liaison will send verification that the Charter School is providing the required training to school personnel providing services to youth experiencing homelessness at least annually. (Education Code Section 48852.5(c)(2).)

Notice

For any homeless student who seeks enrollment at the Charter School, written notice will be provided to the parent/guardian at the time of enrollment and at least twice (2) annually while enrolled at the Charter School.

This notice must be signed by the parent/guardian. The notice must outline general rights, include the name of the Charter School Liaison with contact information, and specifically state that (1) the choice of schools homeless children and youth are eligible to attend; (2) that no homeless student is required to attend a separate school for homeless children or youths; (3) that homeless children and youths shall be provided comparable services as described above, including transportation services, educational services; and (4) that homeless children and youths should not be stigmatized by Charter School personnel. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C).)

Annual Policy Review

The Charter School shall annually review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths or the enrollment of homeless children and youths at the Charter School. In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship. Special attention shall be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school.

School Website Posting

The Charter School shall ensure that the following information is posted, and updated as necessary, on its internet website:

- The name and contact information of the Charter School Liaison(s) for homeless children and youths.

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- The contact information of any employee or contractor that assists the Charter School Liaison in completing the liaison's duties.
- Specific information regarding the educational rights and resources available to persons experiencing homelessness.