



Contra Costa School of Performing Arts Homeless or Displaced Youth Policy

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) (42 U.S.C. § 11431-11435) is federal legislation that ensures the educational rights and protections of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It requires all local educational agencies (LEAs) to ensure that homeless students have access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschools, as provided to other children and youth. The McKinney-Vento Act defines LEAs as public school districts, direct-funded and locally funded charter schools, and county offices of education. The McKinney-Vento Act also authorizes the funding for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.

In accordance with the requirements of federal law, including the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, state law, and State Board of Education Rules, Contra Costa School of Performing Arts will work with homeless students and families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. The Executive Director shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the school liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison's responsibilities include compiling data collected on children and youth in transition, determining and arranging for needed services, facilitating enrollment, and settling disputes.

IDENTIFICATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS:

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Act), 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)et seq., defines homeless students as those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.

This includes children and youth who:

1. Share the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
2. Live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Live in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Are abandoned in hospitals;
5. Are awaiting foster care placement;
6. 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;
7. Live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar setting; or
8. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances set forth in Items 1, 2, and 3 above.



ENROLLMENT/WITHDRAWAL OF HOMELESS STUDENTS:

1. A homeless student should be enrolled immediately even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment.
2. If a homeless student arrives at school without a parent/guardian, the unaccompanied youth shall be enrolled immediately. The Executive Director shall contact the parent/guardian and complete the enrollment process. Students must meet the School's age eligibility criteria for enrollment.
3. Homeless students qualify for free lunch.
4. When students enroll without records (i.e. transcripts/grade reports, birth certificate, immunizations/health records) the Principal or designee shall contact the former school to request the student's records.
5. Parents/guardians shall provide the school with contact information.

Withdrawal:

Homeless students often leave school without officially withdrawing. If the school is contacted by another district for a homeless student's records, requested information shall be provided and school records sent within 15 days to the receiving school district.

SERVICES

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students at SPA.

Nutrition Programs

Homeless students automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch. 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.

Professional Development for All School Staff

All administrators, teachers and employees of the school will be provided professional development on the identification, services and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless children and youth. All identified or suspected homeless children and youths will be referred to the school's homeless liaison. Professional Development will be provided to all staff as the need arises.

Process for Monitoring

Families are informed to contact a teacher (or the Homeless Liaison directly) if they are homeless. In addition, information on homeless services is sent to parents via newsletters and email announcements. Teachers are instructed to notify the homeless



liaison if they identify (or suspect) a student as being homeless. The homeless liaison works very closely with the teachers to ensure accommodations are made to address the student's homeless status (extra support, extended deadlines, transportation to testing, etc.). Also, as needed, the homeless liaison will meet with relevant school administration and staff (e.g. Title I Coordinator) to follow up on any additional services that may be requested.

Transportation

Per the McKinney-Vento Act, Local Education Agencies must provide transportation to homeless students to and from their school of origin. SPA, where (a) feasible, (b) applicable, (c) at the request of the parent/guardian, and/or (d) in the best interest of the homeless children, shall provide transportation to students experiencing homelessness to ensure the students are able to stay at SPA during the duration of their homelessness. SPA may work with the student's district of residence or other agencies, including the California Department of Education, to provide transportation services.

ROLE OF THE HOMELESS LIAISON:

The Homeless Liaison works to ensure:

1. Homeless students and unaccompanied youth:
 - a. Are identified by school personnel;
 - b. Enroll in and have an equal opportunity to succeed in school
 - c. Receive educational services for which they are eligible;
2. Parents/guardians of homeless students are made aware of educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with a meaningful opportunity to participate in their children's education;
3. Enrollment disputes are remediated in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
4. Students who do not have immunization or medical records are assisted;
5. Collaboration and coordination with State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and community and school personnel responsible for providing education and related support services to homeless children and youth.

The school administration shall attempt to remove existing barriers to school attendance by homeless children:

1. Enrollment requirements that may constitute a barrier to the education of the homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent or designee. If the district is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize other reasonable means to determine the appropriate grade level for the child.



2. Fees and charges that may present a barrier to the enrollment or transfer of a homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
3. Customary transportation policies and regulations may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
4. Official school records policies and regulations may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
5. The district shall make a reasonable effort to locate immunization records from information available or shall arrange for students to receive immunizations through health agencies and at district expense.

ENROLLMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

In a case where a dispute occurs regarding the enrollment of a homeless child or youth, the following process must be used:

Step 1

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 parent or unaccompanied youth must file a request for dispute resolution wSPA’s homeless liaison by submitting a letter that initiates the dispute resolution process. SPA will refer the parent or unaccompanied youth to its homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible. The homeless liaison must ensure the dispute resolution process is followed for unaccompanied youth. Within five (5) business days of receipt of the letter, the Executive Director, or other designee, shall provide a written explanation of the School’s decision regarding enrollment to the parent or unaccompanied youth. The written explanation shall be complete and simply stated.

Step 2

If the parent or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the decision, (s)he may notify the homeless liaison within ten (10) school days of his/her intent to appeal the decision to the SPA’s Governing Board. The homeless liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the Board. The Governing Board will review the information and provide a written decision to the parent or unaccompanied youth within fifteen (15) school days of receipt.

Step 3

If the dispute remains unresolved or is appealed following the final decision by the Board, the homeless liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork



to the California Department of Education's Homeless Program Consultant for charter schools for final disposition of this matter.

Legal Reference

42 USC 11431