



HOMELESS/FOSTER EDUCATION POLICY

Board Approval on
May 16, 2019

Policy Statement

ICEF Public Schools adheres to the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act that entitles all homeless school-aged children to the same free and appropriate public education that is provided to non-homeless children. ICEF Public Schools also believes that foster youth deserve the same level of support and protections as homeless students. To remove any barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and academic success faced by homeless students, ICEF will provide general assurances and individual assistance to homeless/foster students and their families, in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

General Assurance

ICEF Public Schools provides homeless/foster students the following general assurance to maximize access to various educational, social and enrichment programs that promote student achievement.

- 1) Homeless/foster children and youth shall not be segregated or stigmatized in any way, based on their home status.
- 2) Homeless/foster children and youth shall be provided services comparable to those received by other students in the school, including educational programs for which students meet eligibility criteria (*such as services offered under Title I or similar state and local programs; programs for students with disabilities; programs for students with limited English proficiency; gifted and talented program; vocational/technical program; and school nutrition programs*).
- 3) ICEF Public Schools shall provide and post notices of the educational rights of homeless/foster children and youth
- 4) ICEF Public Schools shall provide homeless/foster students with access to education and other services necessary for these students to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students.
- 5) Homeless/foster children and youth will have access to school-level funds (set-aside within Title I funding) for serving homeless students.

Definition of Homeless Youth

A homeless student is defined as a person between the ages of birth and twenty-two who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and may:

- Live in an emergency or transitional shelter; abandoned building, parked car, or other facility not designed as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Live “doubled-up” with another family, due to loss of housing stemming from financial problems (e.g., loss of job, eviction or natural disaster);
- Live in a hotel or motel;
- Live in a trailer park or campsite with their family;
- Have been abandoned at a hospital;
- Be awaiting foster placement in limited circumstances;
- Reside in a home for school-aged, unwed mothers or mothers-to-be if there are no other available living accommodations; or
- Be a migratory or abandoned, runaway, or throwaway youth that qualifies as homeless because he/she is living in circumstances described above.

Definition of Foster Youth

A foster youth is defined as a student without parental support and protection, placed with a person or family to be cared for, usually by local welfare services or by court order.

Identification and Reporting

Homeless/foster children and youth will be identified through:

- The application process for enrollment (self-identification)
- School personnel recommendations

, Coordination of activities with other entities and agencies

Using the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of eligibility, the designated Homeless/Foster Student Liaison shall obtain information regarding potentially eligible students as possible, case by case, with sensitivity and utmost discretion. ICEF Public Schools will comply with all federal, state, county and other data collections and reporting requirements regarding homeless/foster youth.

Homeless/Foster Liaison

Every ICEF Public School will designate their Community Relations Coordinator (CRC) to serve as the Homeless/Foster Student Liaison, to provide support and resources for homeless/foster students and families and ensure compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The CRC will receive annual training on applicable policies and procedures to support homeless/foster students.

The Homeless/Foster Liaison will:

1. Ensure that homeless/foster children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies.
2. Ensure that homeless/foster students enrolled in any ICEF Public Schools, have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school. Ensure that homeless/foster students are not segregated from their non-homeless/foster peers.
3. Ensure that homeless/foster families, children, and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate social services.
4. Based on availability of funds, provide homeless/foster students with basic school supplies, such as backpacks and uniforms, and fees for general education testing, as appropriate.
5. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless/foster students is disseminated where children and youth receive services under the Act.
6. Ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated following the dispute resolution provisions.
7. Ensure that the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth is fully informed of all transportation assistance provided by the school if available and feasible.
8. Assist unaccompanied youth in placement and enrollment decisions
9. Assist homeless/foster children and youth who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations or medical records.
10. Collaborate with school staff responsible for the provision of education and related student support services to homeless/foster children and youth. Monitor homeless/foster student attendance and performance, and facilitate their participation in school (clubs, sports, extracurricular).

School Selection

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

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

School Enrollment and Records

All ICEF 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, ICEF Public Schools provides specific information, in its outreach materials, websites, at community meetings, open forums, and regional center meetings, that notifies parents that the school is open to enroll and provide services for all students, and provides a contact number for access to additional information regarding enrollment. Furthermore, ICEF's annual recruitment plan shall include efforts to reach homeless/foster families, children, and youth via free public events, community centers, and local social service providers.

Homeless/foster children and youth will be allowed to apply for enrollment, 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, proof of residency, and immunization records, etc. Enrollment is defined as "attending classes and

participating fully in school activities.” The CRC shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain the required record for student enrollment. If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the parent/guardian shall be referred to the CRC. The CRC shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunization or records for the student. Preference in admission will be granted in accordance with ICEF’s admissions policy.

The laws require the immediate enrollment of homeless/foster students. Schools must immediately enroll homeless/foster student, regardless of missing or pending academic or health records. It is the responsibility of the CRC to request all necessary documents from the previous school, and refer parents to all programs and services for which the student is eligible. Unaccompanied homeless/foster youths have these same rights. Parents and unaccompanied homeless/foster youth may self-identify their current living situations on Student Enrollment Registration Form or by a notifying school administrator.

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

Unaccompanied Homeless/Foster Minor

Homeless/foster youths will not be discriminated against in the application process. Unaccompanied youth includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the CRC 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, despite lack of parent/legal guardian supervision or permission, or “power of attorney” by supervising adult.

Transportation

Per the McKinney-Vento Act, ICEF Public Schools must provide services to homeless children/youth that are comparable to those received by other students in the school selected, including transportation. While ICEF Public Schools does not generally provide transportation to students (Special Education excepted), ICEF will work closely to support any request by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth to provide transportation assistance to students experiencing homelessness to ensure the students are able to attend school during their homelessness. This transportation assistance may be in the form of bus token, voucher, or other reasonable method, as determined by School Principal and parent/guardian or homeless youth.

Nutrition Program

Homeless/foster students automatically qualify for free school nutrition program at ICEF Public Schools. Families will be asked to fill out an application and indicate homeless/foster status. Homeless/foster students will be added to the free meal program as soon as they have been identified.