

Book	Policy Manual
Section	200 Pupils
Title	Homeless Students
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Authority

The Board recognizes the need to promptly identify homeless children and youths within the district and shall ensure equal access to the same educational programs and services provided to other district students. The Board shall facilitate their immediate enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education, in compliance with federal and state law and regulations.[\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]](#)

The Board authorizes the Superintendent to waive district policies, procedures and administrative regulations that create barriers for identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability and success in school of homeless children and youth.[\[3\]](#)

It is the policy of the Board that no student shall be discriminated against, segregated or stigmatized based on his/her homeless status.[\[4\]\[5\]](#)

Definitions

Enroll or **Enrollment** means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.[\[6\]](#)

Homeless children and youths are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, which include the following conditions:[\[4\]\[7\]](#)

Children and youth who are:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship or a similar reason.
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
3. Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters.
4. Abandoned in hospitals.

5. Awaiting foster care placement.
6. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
7. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings.
8. Living as migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in previous examples.
9. Living as run-away children.
10. Abandoned or forced out of homes by parents/guardians or caretakers.
11. Living as school-aged parents in houses for school-aged parents if they have no other available living accommodations.

School of origin is defined as the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled including preschool. When the child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.[\[5\]](#)

Unaccompanied youth means a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth who have run away from home; been abandoned or forced out of home by a parent, guardian or other caretaker; or separated from a parent or guardian for any other reason.[\[6\]](#)

Delegation of Responsibility

The Board designates the Federal Programs Coordinator or Homeless/Foster Care Liaison to serve as the district's liaison for homeless children and youths.[\[5\]](#)

The district's liaison shall ensure outreach and coordination with:[\[5\]](#)

1. Local service agencies and other entities that provide services to homeless children and youths and families.
2. Other school districts on issues of prompt identification, records transfer, transportation and other inter-district activities.
3. District staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.[\[8\]](#)[\[9\]](#)
4. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

The district's liaison shall ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents/guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths including in schools, family shelters, public libraries and

soup kitchens. Such notice shall be provided in a manner and form understandable to parents/guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths.[\[5\]](#)

The district's liaison shall provide reliable, valid and comprehensive data to the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.[\[5\]](#)

Guidelines

Enrollment/Placement

Students shall not be discriminated against, segregated nor stigmatized based on their status as homeless.

Best Interest Determination -

In determining the best interest of a child or youth, the district shall:

1. Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.[\[5\]](#)
2. Consider student-centered factors related to impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety, giving priority to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.[\[5\]](#)
3. If, after such consideration, the district determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the district shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth and shall include information regarding the right to appeal.[\[6\]](#)

Placement -

In accordance with the child's or youth's best interest, a homeless child or youth shall continue to be enrolled in his/her school of origin while s/he remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which s/he obtains permanent housing. Parents/Guardians of a homeless child or youth may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the child or youth is actually living or other schools. The district's liaison shall assist an unaccompanied child or youth, the district liaison will consider the views of the child or youth in determining where s/he will be enrolled with a written explanation of any district decision related to school selection or placement, including the right to appeal.[\[5\]](#)

Enrollment -

The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment pursuant to district policies or the application or enrollment deadline has passed during any period of homelessness. However, the district may require a parent/guardian to submit contact

information. The district liaison shall immediately contact the previous school for oral confirmation of immunizations, and the school shall request academic or other records from the previous district, pursuant to Board policy.[\[5\]](#)[\[10\]](#)[\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)[\[13\]](#)[\[14\]](#)[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)[\[3\]](#)

Assignment -

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 appropriate means to determine the student's placement within the school.[\[17\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

Dispute Resolution -

If a dispute arises over school selection, eligibility or enrollment:[\[5\]](#)

1. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the district's liaison, who shall assist in the dispute resolution process.
2. The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute including all available appeals.
3. The parents/guardians shall be provided with a written explanation of the district's decision, their right to appeal and the procedures to use for the appeal within twenty (20) business days of being notified of the dispute.

Education Records

Information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation shall be treated as a student education records subject to the protections of the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information.[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)

Comparable Services

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other district students including, but not limited to, transportation services; school nutrition programs; career education, vocational programs and technical education; preschool programs; educational programs for which homeless students meet the eligibility criteria, such as: services provided under Title I or similar state or local programs, programs for limited English proficiency and educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students.[\[1\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[18\]](#)[\[19\]](#)[\[20\]](#)[\[21\]](#)[\[22\]](#)[\[23\]](#)[\[24\]](#)[\[8\]](#)

Transportation

The district shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend within the school district.[\[1\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[19\]](#)

If the school of origin is outside district boundaries or homeless students live in another district but will attend their school of origin in this district, the school districts shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.[\[5\]](#)

Training

The district's liaison shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance activities offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.[\[5\]](#)

The district's liaison shall arrange professional development programs for school staff, including office staff.[\[5\]](#)

School personnel providing services to homeless children and youths, including school enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support to:[\[5\]](#)

1. Improve identification of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths;
2. Understand the rights of such children, including requirements for immediate enrollment and transportation; and
3. Heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to, the educational needs of such children.

Legal

1. 24 P.S. 1306
2. 22 PA Code 11.18
3. 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq
4. 42 U.S.C. 11431
5. 42 U.S.C. 11432
6. 42 U.S.C. 11434a
7. 34 CFR 200.30
8. Pol. 113
9. Pol. 103.1
10. Pol. 200
11. Pol. 201
12. Pol. 203
13. Pol. 204
14. Pol. 209
15. Pol. 216
16. Pol. 113.4
17. Pol. 206
18. Pol. 146
19. Pol. 810
20. Pol. 808
21. Pol. 115

22. Pol. 918

23. Pol. 138

24. Pol. 114

22 PA Code 403.1

20 U.S.C. 1232g

20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq

34 CFR Part 99

34 CFR 299.19

67 Fed. Reg. 10698

PA Education for Homeless Children and Youth State Plan