

I. Procedures for Enrollment

Allegany County Public Schools shall not deny, delay, or transfer enrollment solely because a student is homeless, unaccompanied, or because a homeless student is unable to produce school, medical, or residency records.

A. The Allegany County Public Schools shall:

1. Immediately enroll the student without documents: records, birth certificate, residency, or proof of immunization or health records.
2. Immediately enroll the student in the school of origin or the school in the attendance area where the student is living or eligible to attend in accordance with the best interest of the student. A parent, guardian, or a public agency having legal or lawful custody may enroll homeless students. A pupil personnel worker shall assist a homeless student in this process who is an unaccompanied youth in the enrollment process.
3. Contact the school last attended by the homeless student to obtain relevant academic and other records.
4. Refer the family to Student Services for assistance in understanding their rights, services or programs, transportation and procedures for dispute resolutions and appeals.
5. Coordinate with other community resources in offering assistance to the homeless student/family.
6. Cause a pupil personnel worker to assist with immunizations, acquiring immunization records, or refer to school nurse.
7. Promptly provide appropriate disability or special education services for eligible homeless students.
8. Refer to the pupil personnel worker for monitoring school adjustment needs.

II. Placement and Enrollment

- A. Allegany County Public Schools shall enroll the homeless student in a school determined to be in the student's best interest.
- B. The homeless student shall remain in the school determined to be in the student's best interest as long as the student remains homeless, or if housed, until the end of the academic year.
- C. If the student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or school requested by the parent/guardian, the school must provide written explanation of the decision that includes notice of the parent's/guardian's right to appeal.
- D. Homeless students receiving special education services or who have 504 eligibility have the right to immediate access to services as described in their Individualized Education Plan or Accessibility Plan. School systems shall immediately transfer student records to the receiving school without obtaining prior written parental consent for disclosure. A faxed copy or a phone call will be necessary in order to expedite immediate educational placement.

III. Best Interest Placement:

In determining the best interest of the student, the following factors should be considered:

- A. Student's age
- B. School which siblings attend
- C. Experience in school of origin
- D. Academic needs
- E. Emotional needs
- F. Any special family needs
- G. Continuity of instruction
- H. Length of stay in shelter
- I. Likely location of family's future housing
- J. Time remaining in school year
- K. Distance of commute
- L. Safety of the child

IV. Transportation

- A. Transportation will be provided immediately to the school of origin or the school determined to be in the student's best interest. Transportation will be comparable to the transportation provided to other students living in the area of the school selected. The Transportation Department will determine the mode of travel based on travel time, safety, convenience, and cost, and the student's parent will be consulted. Parent reimbursement or pre-pay mileage costs may be offered to parents who provide transportation.
- B. Transportation is required in several circumstances:
 - 1. When a child is attending a Pre-K classroom that is the child's school of origin under the McKinney-Vento Act, the school system must provide transportation.
 - 2. When the lack of transportation is a barrier preventing children experiencing homelessness from accessing Pre-K, the school system must provide transportation. This occurs most frequently when the Pre-K classroom closest to where the child is living is full, and the school system places the child in an alternate Pre-K at a greater distance. Placing children in an alternate Pre-K classroom can be an excellent way to meet the state law mandate that all four-year-olds experiencing homelessness be enrolled in Pre-K. However, if children cannot attend that Pre-K classroom without transportation due to the distance, transportation must be provided.
 - 3. When the lack of transportation is a barrier preventing homeless students from participating in extra-curricular activities, transportation must be provided.
 - 4. Children with special needs experiencing homelessness may be entitled to transportation to early childhood special education programs and early intervention services.
 - 5. If none of these specific requirements applies, children experiencing homelessness must be provided with transportation comparable to what housed children receive.

- C. Specific transportation arrangements can vary, but transportation services always must be safe and appropriate for the child. School buses and other school vehicles are the preferred transportation option; however, they can be supplemented with other options, including gas vouchers or mileage reimbursement for parents, caregivers, or other adults who can provide transportation and agree to reimbursement; passes for public transit where available; taxis; or collaborative transportation options with community partners. MSDE strongly discourages the use of rideshare services for young children if no parent or guardian accompanies the child. Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento grant funds can support the cost of transportation and provide car seats, boosters, and other necessary safety equipment.

V. Barrier Removal

PPWs, Social Workers, Registrars, and Pupil Services teams will be trained and will work diligently to ensure that barriers will be removed to identification, enrollment, and attendance of McKinney-Vento students.

- A. McKinney-Vento students are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless.
- B. Referrals will be made to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
- C. Homeless status is treated as a protected education record that will not be shared without specific consent (or other appropriate reference to privacy/confidentiality).
- D. Absences caused by homelessness will be excused.
- E. Robust interventions will be put in place to improve attendance immediately and tired for a reasonable time prior to any adverse action related to attendance.
- F. Out-of-school- suspensions will not be permitted for any non-violent behaviors.

VI. ACPS Homeless Liaison

- A. The ACPS homeless liaison, who is knowledgeable about the school system's policies and procedures regarding homeless students, can be reached by telephone at 301-759-2001;
- B. The PPW for each school will serve as the liaison for that school;
- C. The ACPS homeless liaison is responsible for:
 - 1. Ensuring that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and are enrolled in an have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in ACPS;
 - 2. Ordering free or reduced-price meals;
 - 3. Coordinating appropriate referrals of homeless children and families to health care, dental care, mental health services, and other appropriate services, including substance abuse and housing;
 - 4. Expediting school placement decisions;
 - 5. Identifying homeless children, youth, and families in the community;
 - 6. Coordinating programs and services to prevent duplication of services;
 - 7. Monitoring programs and projects to ensure their compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;
 - 8. Informing parents or guardians of homeless children and youth of the educational and related opportunities available to their children, ensuring that they are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;

9. Disseminating public notice of the educational rights of homeless children or youth in locations frequented by parents/guardians of such children and youth, including schools, community agencies and organizations, family shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens;
10. Ensuring that the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth and any unaccompanied homeless youth is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, is assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected, and that enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with this regulation; working with Title I administrators to ensure that Title I services are provided in accordance with the reservation of funds required by the McKinney-Vento Act;
11. Coordinating and collaborating with the state coordinator and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related programs and services to homeless children and youths for which they may be eligible, including ESOL services and Head Start (including Early Head Start); and
12. Developing and implementing a program to train school personnel on the educational rights of homeless children and youths, policies and procedures to identify and serve homeless children and youths, and the special needs of homeless children and youths.

VII. Unaccompanied Youth

In addition to the other services provided for in this regulation, guidance counselors shall provide unaccompanied students:

- A. Assistance with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA);
- B. Advice to prepare and improve readiness for college;
- C. Information and individualized counseling regarding college readiness, college selection, the application process, financial aid, and the availability of on-campus supports; and
- D. Information on the student's status as independent students under section 480 of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, and their right to receive verification of this status.

VIII. Complaint Dispute Procedure

Whenever a written request by a homeless student or their parent for any educational service is denied, in whole or in part, the student or parent shall be informed immediately of the right to appeal.

- A. The appeal should be filed with the ACPS Homeless Liaison who will reach a disposition as quickly as possible, but not later than five (5) days. Parents, guardians, or unaccompanied homeless youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the decision of the dispute.
- B. If the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth is dissatisfied with the resolution, or if the ACPS Homeless Liaison does not issue a decision within five (5) days, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth may file a written complaint with the Superintendent within thirty (30) days from the date of the decision or from five (5) days after their appeal was filed with the ACPS Homeless Liaison.
- C. The Superintendent shall issue a decision within ten (10) school days.
- D. If the Superintendent does not issue a decision within ten (10) school days, or if the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth is dissatisfied with the decision, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth may appeal the decision to the Board of Education within thirty (30) days, pursuant to Md. Coded Education Article, § 4-205(c).
- E. The Board of Education shall decide the appeal on expedited basis within 45 days of receipt of the appeal.

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- F. If the parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth is dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Education, the parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth may appeal the decision to the State Board of Education, in writing, within thirty (30) days, pursuant to COMAR 13A.01.01.03.
 - G. During the dispute process, including any appeals, the student shall remain enrolled in the school system.
 - H. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment:
 - 1. The child or youth immediately shall be:
 - i. Admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute: and
 - ii. Provided transportation to the parent-selected school for the duration of the dispute resolution process.
 - 2. Provided transportation to the parent/guardian/unaccompanied homeless youth-selected school for the duration of the dispute resolution process.
 - I. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the right to appeal the decision.
 - J. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth shall be referred to the ACPS Homeless Liaison, who shall assist with carrying out the dispute resolution process under part A of this section, as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute.
 - K. In the case of an unaccompanied homeless youth, the ACPS Homeless Liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

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