

Policy 420 – Rule 2  
**Children and Youth in Transition (Homeless)**  
**Procedures to Implement the McKinney-Vento Act**

The McKinney-Vento Act requires all state and local educational agencies to develop, review and revise their policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention in school of children and youth experiencing homelessness. These procedures will follow the requirements of the reauthorized McKinney-Vento Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), U.S. Department of Education regulations and guidance, and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction bulletin directives.

The School District of Lodi will ensure that all children and youth, including those in transition, receive a free appropriate public education and are given full and meaningful opportunities to succeed in District schools. Children and youth in transition must have access to appropriate public education and be given a full and equal opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state- and district-wide assessments and accountability systems. The District will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation and harassment.

Information regarding this policy will be made available to students, who may be considered homeless, upon enrollment; provided to students who seek to withdraw from school and who are youth in transition; and will be posted or made available in school buildings in the district, as well as other community locations.

### **Definitions**

- **Homeless Student** means children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship, including:
  - children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, camping grounds or trailer parks due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
  - children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
  - children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting; and
  - migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.
  - A child or youth shall be considered homeless for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

Note: Students from a temporarily homeless family (e.g., house fire or other disaster) may or may not be eligible for assistance under the McKinney-Vento Act. Economic factors and the permanence of the living arrangements are considerations determining if these students meet the criteria.

- **Unaccompanied youth** means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is homeless as defined above. The more general term **youth** also includes unaccompanied youth.

- **Enroll and enrollment** mean attending school and participating fully in school activities.
- **Immediate** means without delay.
- **Parent** means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.
- **School of origin** means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
- **Liaison** is the staff person designated by our LEA and each LEA in the state as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Act.

## **Identification**

The School District of Lodi in coordination with other community, county, and state agencies and entities will identify homeless children in the district, both in and out of school. The liaison will inform school personnel of possible indicators of homelessness, foster sensitivity in identifying homeless families and youth, and develop procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The liaison will also instruct school guidance counselors, principals, assistant principals, and office assistants to inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student, and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison. Community, county, and state partners in identification may include other school districts, food pantries, motels, campgrounds, social service agencies, medical clinics, churches, faith-based organizations, and truancy and attendance officers.

## **Homeless Liaison or Designee**

The homeless liaison or designee shall ensure that:

- School personnel working with homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support.
- Homeless students are voluntarily identified by school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies.
- Unaccompanied homeless youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging academic standards as the District establishes for other children and youths, including receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, and are informed of their status as independent students.
- Youths may obtain assistance from the district's homeless liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. School counselors are required to provide assistance to homeless youths in their transition from high school to college – advising them, preparing them for, and improving their readiness for college.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children/youths and unaccompanied homeless youths – schools, shelters and soup kitchens, has been expanded to include public libraries.
- The parents or guardians of a homeless student and any unaccompanied homeless youth is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the student/youth.
- There is compliance with all policies and procedures and mediates enrollment disputes.

- The parents or guardians of a homeless student or youth, and unaccompanied youth, are informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin.
- Programs with homeless students are coordinated with other federal and local programs.

If children or youth under 18 years of age is without a parent or guardian, the District will report this to the county human services department, as required under Wisconsin s. 118.75 and s. 46.22 or 46.23.

### **School Selection and Enrollment Duration**

Each homeless child or youth has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend a school in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and the District. Students who change schools have been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. High mobility rates have also been shown to lower test scores for stable students. Keeping students in their schools of origin enhances their academic and social growth, while permitting our schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

Placement in a school shall be in the student's best interest.

- The District will presume that keeping the child or youth in their school origin is in the child's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth.
- The District will consider student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youths, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth.

If, after considering the above factors, 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 or guardian (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, the District will provide the child's or youth's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reason for its determination, including information regarding the right to appeal the decision.

Costs and services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin, (see below) and services under federal and other programs, shall not be considered in school selection.

### **Enrollment**

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, homeless students may not have school enrollment documents readily available. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment must immediately enroll any homeless child or youth. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency
- Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent and previous schools or teachers.)
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, the school must refer students to the liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state registries, and school- or community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.)
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Any other document requirements
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes and
- Any factor related to the student's living situation.

Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling or liaison.

School fees shall be waived. If the student needs school supplies, the District will supply the basics (notebooks, paper, pens, pencils, etc.).

### **Transportation**

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her school of origin. To avoid such forced school transfers, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin for a homeless child or youth. Transportation shall be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during the pendency of disputes. The liaison shall request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The district, in which the child's school of origin is located, shall make the arrangements and provide the transportation to the homeless student and arrange for cost sharing with other districts where the student may reside. **Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.**

Schools and the liaison shall use the district transportation form to process transportation requests. Requests shall be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the homeless student is living and attending school in this district, this district shall arrange transportation. If the homeless student is living in this district but attending school in another, or attending school in this district but living in another, this district will follow the inter-district transportation agreement to determine who must arrange transportation. It is this district's policy that inter-district disputes shall not result in a homeless student missing school. If such a dispute arises, this district will arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

If the child or youth chooses to continue to attend his or her school of origin, the local educational agency of origin and the local education agency in which the homeless child or youth is living shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing

the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the local educational agencies are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.

When a student who was once homeless becomes permanently housed, the District will no longer provide transportation for that child or youth to the school of origin. The student has the right to continue at the student's school of origin but at parental expense. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will be notified of this provision at the time of enrollment.

## **Services**

Homeless children and youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, including:

- Transportation (as described above)
- Title I (as described below)
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services, programs for English language learners, etc.
- Vocational and technical education programs
- Gifted and talented programs
- School nutrition programs, and
- Before and after school programs run by the district

School personnel must inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a form, manner and language understandable to each parent.

## Free meals

Hunger and poor nutrition are obvious barriers to learning. To help ensure that homeless children and youth are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all homeless children and youth are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a homeless child or youth enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the District's Food Service for immediate processing.

## Title I

Homeless children and youth are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend. The trauma and instability of homelessness puts students at sufficient risk of academic regression to warrant additional support. The District shall reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to homeless children and youth attending Title I schools. The amount reserved shall be determined by a formula based upon the per-pupil Title I expenditure and developed jointly by the liaison and the Title I director. Reserved funds will be used to provide educationally related support services to homeless children and youth, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers to educational success.

## Special Education

The School District of Lodi recognizes that homeless children and youth suffer from disabilities at a disproportionate rate. To address this problem, evaluations of homeless children and youth suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with the students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary, to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the District shall expeditiously designate a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability.

If a homeless student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall then be conducted expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provision of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

## Preschool

Preschool education is a very important element of later academic success. Homeless children have experienced many difficulties accessing preschool opportunities. Homeless children in with disabilities will be referred for preschool services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Homeless children under age three will be referred to the counties for services under Part C of IDEA and screened to determine if referrals for additional Part C services are appropriate. The liaison will collaborate with Head Start programs and other preschool programs to ensure that homeless children can access those programs.

## Community and County Services

Homeless students and families will be referred to outside agencies, when the need arises. The homeless liaison will ensure that homeless youth and children are referred for services, such as health care, dental, mental health, food pantry, Head Start, and other appropriate services.

## **Tardiness and Absences**

When applying any district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child's or youth's living situation shall be excused. District schools will follow state procedures to ensure that homeless youth and children who are out of school are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services.

## **Disputes and Appeals**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the homeless child or youth or unaccompanied youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall have the rights of a homeless student and the ability to access all appropriate educational services, including transportation, free meals, Title I and other services while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and shall immediately refer the parent

or youth to the homeless liaison. The homeless liaison shall ensure the student is enrolled in the school of his or her choice and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The homeless liaison shall keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are repeatedly delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition.

The parent, unaccompanied youth or school district may appeal the liaison's decision to the State Superintendent of WI Department of Public Instruction as provided in the state's dispute resolution process (PI 1).

### **Information Dissemination and Coordination**

The homeless liaison will inform District staff at least once each year about homelessness in order to increase staff awareness of homeless children and youth, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to homeless children and youth.. Information will be shared with community organizations, e.g., churches, laundromats, etc.

The homeless liaison shall coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the counties, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation company, homeless liaisons in neighboring districts and other organizations and agencies. Public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the homeless liaison and the District schools in implementing this policy. Posters will be placed in each school building and brochures explaining parent and unaccompanied youth's rights will be readily available.

### **References:**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§11431 – 11436.  
Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§6311 – 6315.  
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
Policy of the Child Nutrition Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. April 6, 2002  
Policy of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. June 5, 1992  
WI Department of Public Instruction Homeless Bulletin Series: 01, 02, and 03 and 03.06.  
Wisconsin State Statutes 115; 118.75; 46.22 and 46.23 and PI 1