



FOOTHILLS

EDUCATION CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

Homeless Students Policy JBC

Board Approved: Pending

Foothills Education Charter High School will follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (reauthorized in 2004) to ensure that all students receive a free, appropriate, public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools.

Children are viewed with respect at Foothills; therefore, this policy will not refer to children as *homeless* - it will instead use the term *children and youths experiencing homelessness*.

Definitions

The term *children and youths experiencing homelessness* includes students who are otherwise legally entitled to, or eligible for, a free, public education (including preschool), but who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

A child or youth is considered to be experiencing homelessness for as long as he or she is in a living situation outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act and until the end of the school year in which the student moves into permanent housing.

The term *unaccompanied youth* includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and who is homeless as defined by law. The more general term *youth* also includes unaccompanied youth.

The terms *enroll* and *enrollment* include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

Immediate means without delay.

Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth. Legal guardians are included in this term.

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.

Local Liaison is the staff person designated by the system's local educational agency (LEA) and each LEA in the state as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Identification

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison or designee will identify children and youths experiencing homelessness in the district, both in and out of school, and maintain access to data regarding students in this situation. The local liaison or designee will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth experiencing homelessness, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The local liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to offer homeless education information upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison.

The local liaison will keep data on the number of children and youths experiencing homelessness in the district - where they are living, their academic achievement (including performance on state and district-wide assessments), and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruption in their education, or school transfers.

School Selection

Each child and youth experiencing homelessness has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend the school that serves students who live in the attendance zone in which the child or youth is actually living. Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youths experiencing homelessness shall remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's parent or guardian. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in this situation and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years.

Enrollment

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

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 the LEA local liaison. If complete records are not available, IEP teams or other committees or school officials, as appropriate, 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.

Transportation

Transportation is not offered to any student at Foothills Education Charter High School; however, Foothills will provide vouchers for public transportation when needed by any student considered experiencing homelessness.

Services

Children and youths experiencing homelessness shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected. School personnel must also 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.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth experiencing homelessness will be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall also have the rights of a student experiencing homelessness to all appropriate educational 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, give explanation of the right to appeal, and immediately refer the parent or youth to the local liaison. The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute.

Title I, Part A

Children and youths experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend. The district's Title I plan will be coordinated with all McKinney-Vento services through collaboration between the Title I Director and the local liaison. Children and youths experiencing homelessness will be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education Regulations and Policy Guidance.

Training

The local liaison or designee will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for the appropriate school support staff at least once each year.

The local liaison shall also obtain from every school the name and contact information of a building liaison. Building liaisons will lead and coordinate their school's compliance with this policy and will receive training from the local liaison annually.

Coordination

The local 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 community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other organizations and agencies.