

**Policy JQN: Education for Homeless Children and Youth**

**Status:** DRAFT

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**Education of the Homeless School Age Children**

All school-age children, including the homeless, who live within the Jackson County School District, shall be eligible to attend the district's schools. Homeless students in the district will have access to the education and other services needed to ensure that an opportunity is available to meet the same academic achievement standards to which all students are held. A liaison for students in homeless situations will be designated by the district to carry out duties as required by law.

The district will ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized nor segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. A homeless student will be admitted to the district school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living or to the student's school of origin as requested by the parent and in accordance with the student's best interest. Transportation will be provided to and from district school or school of origin in a manner that would be in the best interest of the child as determined by the district Homeless Liaison for homeless students.

The Superintendent of Education has the authority to designate a student as homeless based on criteria outlined in this policy and the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. If, it is determined by the Superintendent that a child or his/her parents are attempting to use a designation of homeless to change schools for reasons other than those delineated in the McKinney Vento Act (i.e. athletics, school choice or other non-related reason), the Superintendent may deny a homeless designation.

The district utilizes this policy as it guideline to explain the rights of homeless students and the responsibilities of the schools to meet their needs and eliminate barriers to school attendance. This information shall also be disseminated in writing and by other means designed to raise awareness of these rights and responsibilities to staff, homeless families and students, the public, and homeless service providers.

**DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this policy, children are deemed to be homeless under the following conditions:

1. A child who is lacking a fixed regular and adequate nighttime residence and who has a primary nighttime residence that IS a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, a temporary residence prior to being placed in an institution, or a place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
  2. A child who IS placed in a transitional or emergency shelter before placement in a foster home or home for neglected children
  3. A child who is temporarily living in a trailer park or camping area due to lack of adequate living accommodations.
  4. A child who is living in doubled-up accommodations due to loss of housing or other similar situation.
  5. A child who is placed in a foster home due to lack of shelter space.
  6. A migratory child who is staying in accommodations not fit for human habitation.
  7. A child who has run away from home and lives in a runaway shelter, abandoned building, the street, or other inadequate accommodations
  8. A child who is placed in a state institution because s/he has no other place to live.
  9. A child who has been abandoned by his/her family and is staying in a hospital.
  10. A child whose parents or guardian will not permit him/her to live at home and who lives on the street, or other inadequate accommodations.
  11. School-age unwed mothers or expectant mothers who are living in homes for unwed mothers because they have no other available living accommodations.
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1. Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 11302 (a)(1);
  2. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

3. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 11302 (a)(2)(C));
4. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
5. Migratory children (as such term is defined in section 6399 of title 20) who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in numbers 2-4 above.

## SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

1. Pursuant to and in compliance with the requirements of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1990, 42USC11431, it shall be the policy of this school district, to the extent practicable under requirements relating to education established by state law, that each eligible child of a homeless Individual and each eligible homeless youth will have access to a free appropriate education comparable to the education provided the children of district residents who are non-homeless, without isolation or stigma.
2. The placement of an eligible homeless child or youth will take into consideration the best interests of the homeless child or youth and placement requests made by a parent
3. The choice of placement in either the "school of origin" or the school serving the "place of abode" will take place regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parent(s) or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parent(s).
4. Provided the homeless child or youth meets eligibility criteria, he/she will be provided transportation services; compensatory education programs for the disadvantaged; educational programs for the handicapped and for students with limited English proficiency; programs in vocational education; programs for the gifted and talented; and school meals programs.
5. Any and all records ordinarily kept by this school district, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, evaluations for special services and programs shall be kept on homeless children and youth and shall be forwarded in a timely fashion should a child or youth enter a new school or school district; and in a manner consistent with S1232g of Title 20
6. Should this school district receive assistance under S11432 of the Act, It shall coordinate with local social service agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to such children or youth and their families
7. Should this school district ever receive assistance under S11432 of the Act, it shall designate a homelessness liaison to insure ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in and succeed in the schools of their district; and, homeless families, children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.
8. The homelessness liaison shall inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the liaison.
9. This school district has and will continue to review and revise, to the extent practicable under the requirements relating to education established by state law, any policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youth in schools selected in accordance with paragraphs 2 3 and 4 above
10. In reviewing and revising such policies, to the extent practicable under the requirements relating to education established by state law, consideration shall be given to Issues concerning transportation, requirements of immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records, or other documentation and guardianship.
11. Disputes which may arise regarding the assignment of a homeless child or youth will be promptly resolved according to the provisions of Policy JBCCA - Assignment of Pupils. Other issues or disputes will be directed to the attention of the school official responsible for that particular matter for prompt resolution. If this dispute cannot be resolved locally, any aggrieved party may make written request for a review of the matter to:

**Coordinator of the Homeless Program  
Mississippi Department of Education  
P. O. Box 771  
Jackson, MS 39205**

Should the homeless child be living with a parent designee, a person with whom the parents have placed the child but who is not a legal guardian, school officials shall communicate directly with the parent designee concerning any school-related matters involving the homeless child and, in addition, shall use their best efforts to communicate the same information to the respective parent(s).

If a dispute arises over any issued covered in this policy, the school where the dispute arises will provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer the parent/guardian or youth to Director of Student Services/Federal Programs in the Jackson County School District Office immediately. The Superintendent shall designate the Director of Student Services/Federal Programs in the district office to investigate and report complaints that are believed to be in non-compliance with the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendment Act and/or issues that deal with the educational placement of homeless children and youth which cannot be resolved at the attendance center. If a parent or guardian has a complaint, he/ she should go first to the building principal. If the dispute cannot be resolved at this point, then it should be presented to the Assistant Superintendent of the Attendance Center. If the dispute is not resolved at this point, it will be presented to the Director of Student Services/Federal Programs in the district office. If the dispute cannot be resolved at this level, a request will be made to the State Department of Education's Coordinator of the Homeless Program for a formal review. The review must be requested in writing immediately after the dispute takes place. The parent/guardian or youth will be given every opportunity to participate in the resolution of the dispute.

Reference: Stewart B. McKinney Act, P.L. 100-77 Mississippi Code 37 -13-91; 37-15-9; 37-7-301; 41-23-37; 37-3 - 49; 37-15-1 through 37-15-3 National School Lunch Act, 1946 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1974

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