

Homelessness exists in our community. A combination of high housing costs and poverty causes many families to lose their housing. Many young people leave their homes due to abuse, neglect, and family conflict. Children and youth who have lost their housing live in a variety of places, including motels, shelters, shared residences, transitional housing programs, cars, campgrounds, and others. Their lack of permanent housing can lead to potentially serious physical, emotional, and mental consequences. The Minidoka County School District, herein referred to as District, will ensure that all children and youth receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools.

Students shall be enrolled in school immediately, without delay regarding any required documents. Once such documents are obtained, they shall be maintained so that they are available in a timely fashion when the child enters a new school or school district. The District shall serve students regardless of whether they are in the custody of a parent or guardian.

#### **Education of Homeless Children**

It is the policy of the District to ensure that:

1. Each child of a homeless individual and each homeless child has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other students;
2. Homelessness does not in any way separate homeless students from the mainstream school environment; and
3. Homeless children and youths have access to the education and other services that such children and youths need to ensure that such children and youths have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic standards to which all students are held.

The Board of Trustees directs all District schools to admit children who are homeless regardless of residence and irrespective of whether the homeless child is able to produce records normally required for enrollment. The Board shall not enter into an out-of-District attendance and tuition agreement with another district for a homeless child.

All schools and employees of the District shall work to ensure that children and youth who are homeless are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment. The District will also strive to prevent stigma against students who are homeless.

#### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions shall apply.

The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" includes attending classes and participating fully in all school activities.

The terms "homeless," "homeless individual," and "homeless person" include:

1. 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, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals

2. 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.
3. Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.
4. Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.
5. An unaccompanied student and homeless families with children and youth are also defined as homeless if they:
  - A. Have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing;
  - B. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and
  - C. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment

The term “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.

The term “school of origin” is defined as the school that the student attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a preschool. When a student completes the final grade level served by the students “school of origin;” the “school of origin” shall progress to the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all of its feeder schools the same as for all students attending one school and progressing to another school in the District.

### **In General**

The District shall ensure the following is provided according to the homeless student's best interest:

1. That the homeless student's education continues in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness:
  - A. In any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and
  - B. For the remainder of the academic year, if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
2. That the homeless student is eligible to enroll in the same schools as non-homeless students who live in the same attendance area where the homeless student is actually living.

**School Stability**

In determining the best interest of the homeless student each school within the District shall:

1. Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the student;
2. Consider student-centered factors related to the student's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless students, giving priority to the request of the student's parent or guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the student;
3. If, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the above presumptions, the Superintendent determines that it is not in student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied student) the student, provide the student's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied student with a written explanation of the reasons for his or her determination, which will be provided in a manner and form understandable to such parent, guardian, or unaccompanied student, including information regarding the right to appeal under "Enrollment Disputes", below; and
4. In the case of an unaccompanied student, ensure that the District's liaison designated under "District Liaison," below, assists in placement or enrollment decisions under this subparagraph, gives priority to the views of such unaccompanied student, and provides notice to such student of the right to appeal under "Enrollment Disputes," below.

**Immediate Enrollment:**

1. **In General:** The school selected in accordance with this policy shall immediately enroll the homeless student, even if the student:
  - A. ~~Is~~ unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation; or
  - B. Has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
2. **Relevant Academic Records:** The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic and other records.
3. **Relevant Health Records:** If the student needs to obtain immunizations or other required health records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent/guardian of the student, or (in the case of an unaccompanied student) the student, to the District's liaison designated under "District Liaison," below, who shall assist in obtaining all necessary immunizations and/or screenings, or other required health records, in accordance with "Records," below.

**Records**

Any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or other required health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding each homeless student shall be maintained:

1. So that the records involved are available, in a timely fashion, when the student enters a new school or school district; and
2. In a manner consistent with FERPA, applicable Idaho law, and District policy.

**Enrollment Disputes**

If a dispute arises over eligibility, or school selection or enrollment in a particular school:

~~1.~~ The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. The student shall receive educational services for which the student is eligible, such as attending classes and full participation in all school activities

~~2.~~ The parent or guardian of the student or (in the case of an unaccompanied student) the student shall be provided with a written explanation identifying the ~~bases~~ basis for any decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by the District, or other entity, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied student to appeal such decisions;

~~2-3.~~ The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied student shall be referred to the local educational agency liaison designated under “District Liaison” below, and upon being informed of the dispute, the liaison shall, within 10 days, initiate an appeal of the dispute regarding the educational placement of homeless student as expeditiously as possible; and

~~—~~ In the case of an unaccompanied student, the liaison shall ensure that the student is immediately enrolled in the school in which the student seeks enrollment pending resolution of the student’s dispute.

~~3.~~ If an agreement cannot be reached between the parties regarding the educational placement of enrollment status of the student, then the District shall seek further assistance from the State Coordinator of Homeless Education to review and determine within ten (10) business days how the student’s best interests will be served. The decision of the State Department of Education shall constitute final resolution.

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**Placement Choice**

The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

When addressing school placement, the student may attend a school different than the school of attendance from before the student became homeless or the school last attended by the student, if such is the choice of the student’s parent and such is feasible.

When addressing school placement, the District's Homeless Liaison shall work with the family to address the student's transportation needs.

**Privacy**

Information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record, and shall not be deemed to be disclosable "directory information" under the Family Education Records Privacy Act ("FERPA").

**Contact Information**

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit the District and/or the enrolling school from requiring the parent or guardian of a homeless student to submit contact information.

**Comparable Services**

Each homeless student in the District shall be provided services comparable to those services provided to other students in the school attended by the homeless student, including the following:

1. Transportation services;
2. Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, or similar State or District sponsored programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for English Learners;
3. Programs in career and technical education;
4. Programs for gifted and talented students; and
5. School nutrition programs.

**District Homeless Liaison**

For purposes of this policy, the Superintendent shall designate a District employee to serve as its liaison to serve homeless students in accordance with the following provisions. The liaison for homeless students designated by the Superintendent shall ensure that:

1. All homeless students are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
2. All homeless students are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed the same as non-homeless students of the District;
3. Homeless families and homeless students have access to and receive educational services for which such families and students are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs), early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other preschool programs administered by the District;

4. All homeless families and homeless students receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
5. The parents or guardians of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
6. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such students, and unaccompanied students, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless students, and unaccompanied students;
7. [Eligibility, school selection or enrollment](#) disputes are mediated in accordance with “Enrollment Dispute,” above;
8. The parent or guardian of a homeless student, and any unaccompanied student, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the student’s school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the student’s assigned school;
9. School personnel providing services to homeless students receive professional development and other support; and
10. Unaccompanied homeless students:
  - A. Are enrolled in school;
  - B. Have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the State establishes for other students; and
  - C. Are informed of their status as independent students under 20 USC § 1087vv(d), and that such students may obtain assistance from the District Liaison to obtain verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

### **Local and State Coordination**

The District’s liaison(s) for homeless students shall, as a part of their duties, coordinate and collaborate with the Idaho State Office of the Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths, as well as with community and school personnel who are responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless students. Such coordination shall include collecting and providing to the State Coordinator the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to meet the requirements of 42 USC § 11432(f)(1) and (3).

### **Homeless Status**

The District’s Liaison who receives training provided by the Idaho State Office of the Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths may authorize a homeless student who is eligible for and participating in a program provided by the District, or the immediate family of such student, who otherwise meets the eligibility requirements Federal Housing

Assistance (see 42 USC §§ 11360 *et. seq.*), to do so without approval or other agency action by or on behalf of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Title I, Part A**

Any student who is homeless and attends school within the District is eligible for Title I, Part A services. The District shall set aside funding to provide homeless students who attend schools that do not participate in Title I, Part A with services comparable to those provided by participating schools. Funding may also be set aside to provide targeted assistance to homeless students who attend participating schools.

**LEGAL REFERENCES:**

**Idaho Code 33-1404**  
**The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,**  
**42 U.S.C. §11301 Education for Homeless Children and**  
**Youth Program: Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless**  
**Assistance Act, As Amended by the No Child Left Behind**  
**Act of 2001:**  
**Non-Regulatory Guidance Title I, Part A, of the Elementary**  
**and Secondary Education Act**  
**20 U.S.C. §§6311 – 6315 The Individuals with Disabilities**  
**Education Act 20 U.S.C. §§1400 et. seq. Child Nutrition and**  
**WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004**  
**42 U.S.C. §§1758 et. seq. June 5, 1992 Policy of the**  
**Administration for Children and Families of the U.S.**  
**Department of Health and Human Services.**

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