

Instruction

Education of Homeless Children ¹

Each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths, including a public pre-school education.² A *homeless child* is defined as provided in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the Education for Homeless Children Act.³ The Superintendent or designee shall act as or appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children to coordinate this policy's implementation.⁴

A homeless child may attend the District school that the child attended when permanently housed or in which the child was last enrolled. A homeless child living in any District school's attendance area may attend that school.⁵

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ State and federal law control this policy's content. This sample policy contains the basic requirements of the Education for Homeless Children Act (105 ILCS 45/), as well as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §11431 *et seq.*). Other policies that are relevant to the education of homeless children are listed in the Cross References, e.g., school admissions and immunizations.

² For high school districts, delete "including a public pre-school education" at the end of the sentence.

³ Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §11434a(2)), *homeless children and youths* (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 11302(a)(1)); and (B) includes —

- i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a 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; or are abandoned in hospitals;
- ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 11302(a)(2)(C));
- iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- iv. *migratory* children (as such term is defined in section 6399 of title 20) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Note: Section §11434a(2) no longer includes children "awaiting foster care placement" within the definition of *homeless children and youths*.

Under the Education for Homeless Children Act (105 ILCS 45/1-5), *Homeless person, child, or youth* includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- (1) An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime place of abode.
- (2) An individual who has a primary nighttime place of abode that is:
 - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
 - (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
 - (C) a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

See www.isbe.net/Pages/Homeless.aspx for helpful informational resources and training with regard to the education of homeless children in Illinois. See www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/legislation.html for the U.S. Dept. of Education's information about federal requirements.

⁴ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(ii).

⁵ 105 ILCS 45/1-10.

The Superintendent or designee shall review and revise rules or procedures that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youths. In reviewing and revising such procedures, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship.⁶ Transportation shall be provided in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and State law.⁷ The Superintendent or designee shall give special attention to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school.⁸ If a child is denied enrollment or transportation under this policy, the Liaison for Homeless Children shall immediately refer the child or his or her parent/guardian to the ombudsperson appointed by the Regional Superintendent and provide the child or his or her parent/guardian with a written explanation for the denial.⁹ Whenever a child and his or her parent/guardian who initially share the housing of another person due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar hardship continue to share the housing, the Liaison for Homeless Children shall, after the passage of 18 months and annually thereafter, conduct a review as to whether such hardship continues to exist in accordance with State law.¹⁰

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

⁶ The first sentences in this paragraph are required by 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(7). 410 ILCS 535/25.3, amended by P.A. 100-506, requires fees for certified copies of birth records be waived for individuals whose homeless status has been verified. A public school homeless liaison or school social worker may verify homeless status, in accordance with procedures established by the State Registrar of Vital Records. *Id.*

⁷ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(iii), 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(4)(A), and 105 ILCS 45/1-15. The School Code and Education for Homeless Children Act permit school districts to use their State transportation funds to provide financial assistance to children who are homeless or who qualify as *at risk of becoming homeless* when: (1) the financial assistance is not in excess of the district's actual costs for providing the transportation to the student, and (2) the district is not otherwise claiming the expenditures through another State or federal grant. 105 ILCS 5/29-5 (transportation reimbursement), amended by P.A. 102-539, and 105 ILCS 45/1-17 (homeless assistance). A child is considered *at risk of becoming homeless* if the child's parent/guardian, other person who enrolls the child, or unaccompanied minor provides documented evidence that the child's living situation will no longer be fixed, regular, and adequate within eight weeks, resulting in the child becoming homeless. 105 ILCS 45/1-17(d). Prior to providing such financial assistance, a district must enter into a written housing plan with the parent/guardian, person who enrolled the child, or unaccompanied minor. *Id.* at 1-17(c). Financial assistance may include: (1) mortgage or rental assistance that will allow a child to remain permanently in his/her living situation or obtain a new living situation; and/or (2) assistance with unpaid bills, loans, or other financial debts that results in housing being inadequate. *Id.* at 1-17(a). See 6:140-AP, *Education of Homeless Children*, f/n 1, for a discussion of issues that districts should consider in developing such plans.

⁸ Required by 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(7)(C).

⁹ Required by 105 ILCS 45/1-25. The Ill. State Board of Education's *Homeless Dispute Resolution Procedures* (published September 2017 and updated December 2021) are available at: www.isbe.net/Pages/Homeless.aspx.

Use this alternative for districts in suburban Cook County: replace "Regional Superintendent" with "Intermediate Service Center Executive Director."

¹⁰ Optional. 105 ILCS 45/1-25(a-5). As an alternative, a school board may omit this sentence or use a permissive verb, such as, "...the Liaison for Homeless Children may, after the passage of 18 months and annually thereafter, conduct..." Any change required as a result of this review becomes effective at the close of the school year. Any person who knowingly or willfully presents false information in any review commits a Class C misdemeanor.

LEGAL REF.: 42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq., McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
105 ILCS 45/, Education for Homeless Children Act.

CROSS REF.: 2:260 (Uniform Grievance Procedure), 4:110 (Transportation), 7:10 (Equal Educational Opportunities), 7:30 (Student Assignment and Intra-District Transfer), 7:50 (School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools), 7:60 (Residence), 7:100 (Health, Eye, and Dental Examinations; Immunizations; and Exclusion of Students)

ADMIN. PROC.: 6:140-AP (Education of Homeless Children)