

AR-5112.6 (a)

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

No Wrangell Public Schools' student shall be deprived of any opportunity or benefit offered by the program of instruction because of his/her living situation. Therefore, in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, steps shall be taken to remove barriers to education for homeless children and youth. Provisions shall be made for homeless students to fully participate in all aspects of their education; this may include continued attendance in the school of origin; establishing a school of origin, transportation assistance; immediate enrollment; records retrieval; ensuring accrual of credits; immediate access to free meal program; obtaining materials for instruction; access to post-secondary preparation and planning; and full participation in school activities, including extracurricular fee waivers.

District Staffing

The Superintendent shall designate at least one staff person to serve as a Homeless Liaison to fulfill the duties set forth in McKinney-Vento law. The liaison(s) shall work to identify homeless children and facilitate each homeless child's access to a free and appropriate public education.

Homeless Student Defined

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless children or youth are defined as children or youth under age 21 who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes a child or youth who is sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; is living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; is living in emergency or transitional shelters; is abandoned in hospitals; is awaiting foster care placement; is living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing or similar settings; is a migratory child who meets qualifying homeless criteria; or is an unaccompanied youth (youth who meet qualifying homeless criteria and are not in the physical custody of their parent or legal guardian).

The U.S. Department of Education has determined that factors to consider in determining whether housing is "substandard" include whether the housing lacks one of the fundamental utilities such as water, electricity, or heat; is infested with vermin or mold; lacks a basic functional part such as a working kitchen or a working toilet; or may present unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities.

Enrollment

The Homeless Liaison, in consultation with the child's parent/legal guardian or the unaccompanied youth, will consider the best interest of the child in determining school placement. Consistent with the student's best interest, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin for the duration of their homelessness and until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school or origin, a parent/ legal guardian of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school attendance area in which the student is currently living.

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

For students new to the district, school of origin shall be determined by considering the availability of appropriate support services for the student and the location of the student's temporary address.

The school selected shall enroll the homeless student immediately and without delay, even without records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization and health exam records, proof of residency, or other documentation. The District may require a parent/legal guardian or unaccompanied youth to submit contact information.

If a dispute arises, the student shall immediately be admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought by the child's parent/legal guardian or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The district must provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the homeless student's parent/legal guardian or unaccompanied youth. The parent/legal guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the Homeless Liaison, who will carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

Transportation to School of Origin

If it is in the best interest of the homeless child or unaccompanied youth to remain in the school of origin, transportation to and from that school must be provided at the request of a parent/legal guardian (or the Homeless Liaison, for unaccompanied youth) for as long as the student is homeless and attending the school of origin. This transportation must also be feasible for the student and in the student's best interest. Policies or practices regarding transportation of students, which might cause a barrier to the attendance of a homeless child or youth, may be waived by the Superintendent.

Attendance and Retention

Regular district, school, and classroom attendance policies shall be approached with special consideration when regarding a student identified as homeless. Schools are required to contact their Homeless Liaison when a homeless student is absent for 3 or more consecutive days without prearranged notice or when the total number of absences in a quarter goes beyond 7 days. School Administrators shall work with the Homeless Liaison to determine if waivers are appropriate for absences stemming from homelessness. No student with a waived absence shall be denied the opportunity to make up work or take a test given on the day of absence, have grades tied directly to in-school, class attendance policies, or be denied an award or eligibility to compete for an award. Attendance issues shall not act as a barrier to the child's education.

Enrollment Disputes

Students identified by the Homeless Liaison will be monitored by the Intervention Teams of the student's school of attendance; plans for academic support will be provided as needed at the site level.

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

Records

Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs of each homeless child shall be maintained so that appropriate services may be given to the student, so that necessary referrals can be made, and so that records may be transferred in a timely fashion when a homeless child or youth enters a new school district. Copies of records shall be made available upon request to parents/legal guardians or unaccompanied youth.

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