

Adopted: 8/27/2002

Saint Paul Public School Policy

503.01

*Revised: 6/17/2008
11/17/2019*

503.01 Children & Youth Experiencing Homelessness

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children and youth who are experiencing homelessness receive the same educational opportunities as other students who are not homeless. This policy is intended to ensure that the School District is in full compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and applicable Minnesota law.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT

Children and youth who are homeless will have the opportunity to meet the same state and School District standards expected for all students. Children and youth who are homeless are to be provided educational services comparable to those received by any student of the School District, and all appropriate educational and support services available at all grade levels.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. The phrase “children and youth experiencing homelessness” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. They include:

1. Children and youth 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 (as defined by applicable law) or camping grounds due to the 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 public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
3. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and,
4. Migratory children, as this term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this definition because the children are living in circumstances described above.

B. The phrase “school of origin” means the school the student attended when he or

she last had permanent housing or the school last attended.

- C. The “Homeless Liaison” is a person designated by the School District as the School District contact for students in homeless situations. The Homeless Liaison is responsible for carrying out the duties prescribed in applicable federal and state laws. The Project REACH and Fostering Connections Supervisor is designated as the School District’s homeless liaison.

IV. SCHOOL SELECTION AND ENROLLMENT

- A. Children and youth experiencing homelessness shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other students.
- B. Homelessness is not sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. Children and youth experiencing homelessness shall not be segregated in separate schools, separate programs within schools, or separate settings. This does not prohibit special programs for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or temporary, special, and supplemental services for any student.
- C. The School District will keep a child or youth experiencing homelessness in his or her school of origin, unless it would be in the student’s best interest to enroll the student in another school. The School District will 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 parent or guardian (or youth in the case of an unaccompanied youth). Factors related to the student’s best interest include student-centered factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of children and youth experiencing homelessness. In conducting the best interests analysis, the School District will give priority to the request of the child’s or youth’s parent or guardian (or the youth in the case of an unaccompanied youth).
- D. Children and youth experiencing homelessness may stay in their school of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. Alternatively, students may enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance areas are eligible to attend.
- E. The School District homeless liaison must assist unaccompanied youth, who are not in the custody of a parent or guardian, in making placement or enrollment decisions.
- F. If, after conducting the best interest determinations, the School District determines it is not in the student’s best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian (or the youth in the case of an accompanied youth), the School District will provide a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, including information regarding the right to appeal, in a manner and form that is understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

- G. The School District will immediately enroll the child or youth experiencing homelessness in the school selected in accordance with this policy, even if the child or youth cannot produce records normally required for enrollment (including previous academic records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation) or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- H. The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth experiencing homelessness to obtain relevant academic and other records. If a student does not have immunizations or other required health records, the homeless liaison must immediately assist in obtaining them. The student must be enrolled in school in the interim. Educational and medical records must be obtained as soon as possible, consistent with applicable state and federal laws, by the School District.

V. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- A. If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, the child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.
- B. The parent or guardian (or youth in the case of an unaccompanied youth) will be provided with a written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or enrollment. The notice must include a dispute resolution process developed by the Superintendent in accordance with any applicable guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education.

VI. TRANSPORTATION

- A. Children and youth experiencing homelessness must be provided transportation to and from their school of origin at the request of the parent or guardian, or by the Homeless Liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, consistent with the School Board Policy 707.00 Transportation Eligibility and applicable law.
- B. If a child or youth experiencing homelessness has living arrangements outside of the School District's boundaries, the School District will attempt to reach an agreement with the school district in which the student has living arrangements in an effort to apportion costs and responsibility for transportation.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq. (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)

CROSS REFERENCES:

Policy 707.00 Transportation Eligibility