



HOMELESS EDUCATION
(Students)

HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, English learner, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, school nutrition programs, summer programming and extracurricular activities.

Homeless Liaison

The superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's liaison for homeless students and their families.

The district's liaison for homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. The liaison shall ensure district staff receive professional development and other support on issues involving homeless students.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including, but not limited to:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Being abandoned in hospitals;
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;



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6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings;

7. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

Students Remaining in Schools of Origin

To the extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. For homeless students who complete the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term "school of origin" shall also include the receiving school in the same school district educating students at the next grade level.

Students Enrolling in District Where Sheltered or Temporarily Residing

Parents or guardians may elect to enroll homeless students in the school district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing, rather than having the student remain in the school of origin. Enrollment changes for homeless students should take place immediately.

If homeless students are unable to provide written proof of their shelter or temporary residence in the district, the homeless liaison will work with the family seeking enrollment to determine homelessness. Information regarding a homeless student's living arrangement shall be considered a student education record, and not directory information. Records containing information about the homeless student's living arrangement may not be disclosed without the consent of the parent or guardian or satisfaction of another student-privacy related exemption.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be permitted to enroll under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the homeless liaison is directed to assist. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. After enrollment, the district will immediately request available records from the student's previous school.

Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families residing in the district. Accordingly, the district will provide transportation services to school in a manner comparable to the transportation provided for all other students in the district.



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Dispute Resolution

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. If the district disagrees with a parent or guardian's decision to keep a student enrolled in the school of origin and considers enrollment in the district where the student is sheltered or temporarily residing to be in the student's best interest, the district will explain to the parent or guardian, in writing and in a language the parent can understand the rationale for its determination and provide parent or guardian with written notice of their rights to appeal the district's determination to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. During the pendency of any such appeal, the student should remain enrolled in the school selected by the parent or guardian, receiving transportation to school and access to other available services and programs. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student or will divide the costs equally. Formerly homeless students who find permanent housing mid-school year will continue to receive transportation services until the end of the school year.

Approved 1/14/14

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