

## 556 HOMELESS EDUCATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy is designed to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided equal access to educational programs and have an opportunity to meet the same challenging academic standards as all other students in the School District of Portage. These students shall not be segregated on the basis of their status as homeless with established safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness as per the definition as identified in the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**.

### **Definition of Homeless Children and Youth**

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship.

It includes children and youth who:

- are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- are living in motels, hotels, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- are living in emergency shelters
- are abandoned in hospitals or waiting in foster care placement
- have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or bus or train stations
- are runaway children or abandoned

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with parents or in cases of unaccompanied youth the local educational agency liaison.

### **Enrollment**

Children will be immediately enrolled and identified on a case by case basis.

- Ensure that staff members are familiar with and understand the requirements of the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
- District Secretaries in all buildings should know who the homeless liaison is
- Include information about the homeless liaison on the district website
- The rights of the homeless shall be published and available to students, parents, and community agencies

### **Placement**

Students shall be placed in a school according to the child’s best interest

- continue the child’s or youth’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, or for the duration of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during the academic year.
- in determining the best interests of the child or youth to the extent feasible the child or youth will be kept in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child’s or youth’s parent(s) or guardian(s), for the duration of homelessness.
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local educational agency liaison will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the requests of such unaccompanied youth.
- the choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

### **Residency**

A homeless child or youth is a resident if the child is personally present somewhere within the district with a purpose to remain but not necessarily to remain permanently.

The child or youth shall be considered a resident when living with a parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis not solely for school purposes or for participation in extra curricular activities.

Homeless students who do not live with their parents or guardians may enroll themselves in school.

The address listed on the enrollment forms becomes proof of residency.

### **Comparable Services**

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school district, such as: transportation, preschool programs, free and reduced lunch, Title 1 or other services.

### **Transportation**

Once permanent housing is found the family has a choice to stay in the school they are attending, school of origin or attend the school where they have found housing. If a family chooses to stay in the school of origin, transportation will be provided until the end of the academic year.

Permanent housing is defined as any signed lease or long-term approved living situation. Self-paying day to day in a motel is not considered permanent housing.

In the case where the school of origin and current residence are different LEA's, the two school districts will agree on a method for transportation and share costs.

### **Homeless Liaison Designation**

The Director of Instruction shall be designated as the Homeless Liaison.

Responsibilities include:

- Meet with school personnel for identification/notification processes.
- Assist homeless parents and guardians or unaccompanied youths with obtaining medical and academic records for school enrollment and verifying eligibility for participation in food and nutritional programs.
- Full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school district is explained to homeless children and youth.
- Homeless families, children and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate agencies.
- Public notice of educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in such public places as school, meal sites and other locations frequented by low income families.
- Compliance with all policies and procedures and resolve any enrollment disputes.
- Ensure district policies and procedures do not serve as barriers for the enrollment and participation of homeless children and youth.

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – April 12, 2004

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – May 10, 2004

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