

The Elkin City Board of Education recognizes that homelessness alone should not be a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. The Elkin City Board of Education will strive to ensure that homeless students are identified and provided access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students in the school system. In accordance with federal and state law and regulations the Board of Education will provide homeless students with access to instructional programs that support their achievement and to other services for which they are eligible. Students shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless, nor shall they be stigmatized in any way.

I. DEFINITIONS

A. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 defines "Homeless" students as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and include the following:

1. 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; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
4. Migratory children who meet one of the above-described circumstances.

B "School of origin" means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

C. "Unaccompanied youth" refers to a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (e.g., runaway's and children and youth denied housing by their families).

II. HOMELESS STUDENT LIAISON

A. The Superintendent shall designate an individual to act as Elkin City Schools' Homeless Student Liaison. School personnel and service providers working with homeless families shall be informed of the duties of the Homeless Student Liaison.

B. The Homeless Student Liaison will be responsible for ensuring that:

1. Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
2. Homeless children and youths enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school;
3. Homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, Title I, Child Nutrition, and preschool programs administered by Elkin City Schools, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;
4. The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services, such as schools, family shelters, restaurants, hospitals, laundromats, and area businesses;
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law;
7. The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school the student will be attending;
8. Unaccompanied youths are assisted in placement or enrollment decisions and provided notice of the right to appeal; and
9. Children or youths who need to obtain immunizations or immunization medical records receive assistance.

III. ENROLLMENT/PLACEMENT

Elkin City Schools will determine, according to the best interest of the child or youth, whether the child or youth will be enrolled in the school of origin or in the public school in which the child or youth is actually living.

If the youth is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, the homeless liaison will assist in placement and enrollment decisions, with the views of the youth taken into consideration.

The school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization records, evidence of residency, or other documentation.

Elkin City Schools may require a parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth to provide contact information.

Elkin City Schools must provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth if Elkin City Schools sends the child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or other than a school requested by the parent or guardian.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison will provide notice of the right to appeal.

The enrolling school shall contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations or immunization or medical records, the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth will be referred to the homeless liaison for assistance.

IV. ENROLLMENT DISPUTES

If there is a dispute concerning enrollment, the child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. Elkin City Schools has established the following Dispute Resolution Process to be followed to determine placement of the child or youth.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

A. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school

- the homeless student shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute;
- the parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision;
- the student, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the district's homeless liaison who shall carry out the appeal process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

B. Appeal Process

Oral Complaint

In the event that an unaccompanied student or the parent or guardian of a student (hereinafter referred to as the Complainant) disagrees with a school's decision regarding the student's eligibility to attend the school, the Complainant shall orally present his position to the district homeless liaison.

Written Complaint

If the disagreement is not resolved within five (5) school days, the Complainant may present a written complaint to the Homeless Student Placement Review Committee. The written complaint must include the following information: the date the complaint is given to the district homeless liaison; a summary of the events surrounding the dispute; the name(s) of the school division personnel involved in the enrollment decision; and the result of the presentation of the oral complaint to the district homeless liaison.

Within five (5) school days after receiving the written complaint, the Homeless Student Placement Review Committee will reach a decision regarding the contested enrollment and shall provide a written statement of that decision, including the reasons therefore, to the Complainant. The Homeless Student Placement Review Committee will inform the Superintendent of the formal complaint and its resolution.

Appeal to Superintendent

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the written decision of the Homeless Student Placement Review Committee, the Complainant may appeal that decision to the Superintendent by filing a written appeal. The Homeless Student Placement Review Committee shall ensure that the Superintendent receives copies of the written complaint and the response thereto. The Superintendent shall schedule a conference with the Complainant to discuss the complaint. Within five (5) school days of receiving the written appeal, the Superintendent shall provide a written decision to the Complainant including a statement of the reasons therefore.

V. SERVICES

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to services available to other students in the school system including, but not limited to, transportation services; educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and students with limited English proficiency; vocational and technical programs; remediation programs, including Title I; preschool programs; before and after school-care programs; and school meals/nutrition programs.

VI. TRANSPORTATION

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 another school unit and the student is enrolled in Elkin City Schools, the school systems will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will share the responsibilities and costs equally.

VII. RECORDS

Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding each homeless student, shall be maintained so that records may be transferred when a student enters a new school system. Access to records will be available to parents and students in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).