

# Homeless Youth

## Procedures

Hickman County Schools will ensure that all children and youth receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools. Hickman County follows the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act.

Under federal law, children and youth in transition must have access to appropriate public education, including preschool, and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state and district wide assessments and accountability systems. Our schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation and harassment.

### Definitions:

- Children and youth in transition means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education, including preschool, and lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:
  1. children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, camping grounds or trailer parks due to 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 youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
  3. children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus, or train station, or similar setting; and
  4. migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth should be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

- Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.
- Enroll and enrollment means attending school and participating fully in school activities.
- Immediate means without delay.
- Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

- School or origin means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
- Liaison is the staff person designated by our school system as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Act.

### Identification

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the liaison will identify children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth as in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student, and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison. Community partners in identification may include: motels, welfare departments and other social service agencies, faith based organizations and legal services.

The liaison will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district, where they are living, their academic achievement, and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education or school transfers.

### Enrollment

Schools must immediately enroll any child or youth in transition. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

1. Proof of residency;
2. Transcripts/school records;
3. Immunizations or immunizations/health/medical/physical records;
4. Proof of guardianship;
5. Birth certificate;
6. Any other document requirements;
7. Unpaid school fees.

Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling or liaison.

### Transportation

Transportation shall be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school including during any disputes. The liaison shall request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will only be considered in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the student. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Schools and the liaison shall use the district transportation form to process transportation requests. Requests shall be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the student in transition is living and attending school in this district, this district shall arrange transportation. If the student in transition is living in this district but attending school in another, or attending school in this district but living in another, this district will determine who must arrange transportation.

In addition to receiving transportation to and from the school of origin upon request, children and youth in transition shall also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to housed students.

### Services

Children and youth in transition shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, including:

- Transportation
- Title I
- Education services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners.
- Vocational and technical education programs
- Gifted and talented programs
- School nutrition programs
- Before and after school programs
- Pre-K services.

Evaluations of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with student's prior and subsequent schools as necessary, to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the district shall expeditiously designate a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If a student has an IEP, the enrolling school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall then be conducted expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provisions of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

Any tardiness or absence related to a child's or youth's living situation shall be excused. School personnel shall refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The liaison will assist the school in making such referrals, as necessary.

School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a form, manner and language understandable to each parent.

## **Free Meals**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the district nutrition office for immediate processing.

## **Title I**

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend. The district reserves funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to children and youth in transition attending non-participating schools. Reserved funds will be used to provide educationally related support services to children and youth in transition, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers that prevent regular attendance.

The Title I plan will be coordinated between the Title I director and the liaison. Children and youth in transition shall be assessed, reported on and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education regulations and guidance.

## **Preschool**

To facilitate preschool enrollment and attendance, these procedures will also apply to preschools. Children in transition will receive priority enrollment in preschool (PreK) programs operated by the district, including exempting children in transition from waiting lists.

Children in transition with disabilities will be referred for preschool services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Children in transition under age three will be referred for at-risk services under Part C of IDEA and screened to determine if referrals for additional Part C services are appropriate. The liaison will collaborate with Head Start and other preschool programs to ensure those children in transition can access these programs.

## **Coordination**

The liaison shall coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private services providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, liaisons in neighboring districts and other organizations and agencies.

The liaison will conduct training for the following LEA and school staff at least once each year: principals/assistant principals, curriculum officer, and federal program administrators. The trainings and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of

homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with these procedures and increase sensitivity to children and youth in transition.

### **Disputes**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in these procedures, the child or youth in transition shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I services while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and shall immediately refer the parent or youth to the liaison. The liaison shall ensure the student is enrolled in the school of his or her choice and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The liaison shall keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are repeatedly delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition.