



BOARD APPROVED

JUL 17 2025

**To:** Brian Foster, Superintendent and the Marion County School Board  
**From:** Dr. Alicia Conerly, Director of Federal Programs *je 7/1/25*  
**cc:** Jessica Griffin, Director of Finance  
**Date:** July 01, 2025  
**Re:** Homeless Plan/Procedures

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Mr. Brian Foster and Marion County School Board Members,

I am requesting approval of the district's Homeless & Unaccompanied Youth Plan/Procedures.

The Homeless & Unaccompanied Youth Plan/Procedures is a requirement for all school districts in the state and must be board approved. It is used as a means to ensure that children and youth who lack a fixed regular, and adequate nighttime residence are entitled to or eligible for a free public education, including preschool.

The plan is created using the current McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The plan has been attached for your review and approval.

Attachments:

MCSD Homeless Plan/Procedures for FY'26

*Brian Foster*



**Plan/Procedures for  
Enrolling  
Homeless Students  
&  
Unaccompanied Youth**

Reviewed/Revised 05/27/22  
Reviewed/Revised 06/05/23  
Reviewed/Revised 04/03/24  
Reviewed/Revised 06/27/24  
Reviewed/Revised 07/01/2025

**Marion Co. School District  
Procedures for Enrolling Homeless  
Students and Unaccompanied Youth**

**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 who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- 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, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals.
- 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.
- Children and youth living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.
- Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth will 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* mean attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

*Immediate* means without delay.

*Parent* means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

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

*Local Liaison* is the staff person designated by the Marion County School District as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the local homeless education liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

**IDENTIFICATION**

The Federal Programs Director and/or designee 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 Federal Programs Director. When the designated liaison at a school identifies a youth as having characteristics of being homeless, then the school reports this youth with documentation to the Federal Programs Director. Then the Federal Programs Director notifies the food service manager and the district data manager. The liaison determines the needs of the youth or family and takes the appropriate action.

The Federal Programs Director will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district.

## **SCHOOL SELECTION**

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that housed students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and our school district. Students who change schools have been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. High mobility rates also have been shown to lower test scores for stable students. Keeping students in their schools or origin enhances their academic and social growth while permitting our schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools or origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent or youth's wishes. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years.

Feasibility will be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth's wishes. Potential feasibility considerations include:

- The age of the child or youth
- The distance of a commute and the impact it may have on the student's education
- Personal safety issues
- A student's need for special instruction (e.g., special education and related services)
- The length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location
- The time remaining in the school year

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin (see next page) and services under federal and other programs, will not be considered in determining feasibility.

## **ENROLLMENT**

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have school enrollment documents

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

- Proof of residency
- Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent, and previous schools or teachers.)
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (if necessary, the school must refer students to the local liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state registries, and school-or community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.)
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Any other document requirements
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes
- Any factor related to the student's living situation

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

Unfortunately, some students will present themselves for enrollment at a point during the semester or school year at which time it would be impossible for students to accrue credits for classes under normal circumstances. In this instance, the school must still allow the student to participate in school activities. The liaison in conjunction with the school counselor must ensure students receive appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school. That could include providing partial credits for completed work and using recovery programs to make up for lost school time.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her school of origin. To avoid such forced school transfers, at a parent's request, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during pending disputes. The local liaison will request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered only in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the student, as discussed above.

Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Schools and local liaisons will use the district transportation form to process transportation

requests. Requests will be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the student in transition is living and attending school in this district, this district will 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 coordinate with the neighboring district to arrange transportation. It is this district's policy that inter-district disputes will not result in a student in transition missing school. If such a dispute arises, this district will arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. In addition to receiving transportation to and from the school of origin upon request, children and youth in transition will also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to housed students.

## **SERVICES**

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

- Transportation (as described above)
- Title I, Part A, services (as described below)
- Educational 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
- Before – and after–school programs

The district recognizes that children and youth in transition suffer from disabilities at a disproportionate rate, yet frequently are not evaluated or provided appropriate special education and related services. To address this problem, evaluations of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability will be given priority and coordinated with students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary to ensure the timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the district will designate expeditiously a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If participation of a surrogate parent in the student's education is needed prior to the appointment of a surrogate parent, the district will designate a temporary surrogate in accordance with the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school will implement it immediately. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations will 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 provision of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

When applying any district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused. Our school district will follow state procedures to ensure that youth in transition and youth who are out of school are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services.

School personnel will refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The local liaison assists the school in making such

referrals, as necessary.

School personnel 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.

## **DISPUTES**

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

The school where the dispute arises provides the parent or unaccompanied youth a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and refers the parent or youth to the local liaison immediately. The local liaison ensures that the student is enrolled in the requested school and receives services to which he or she is entitled and resolves the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth is given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The local liaison keeps records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition repeatedly.

The parent, unaccompanied youth, or school district may appeal the school district's decision as provided in the state's dispute resolution process.

## **FREE MEALS**

Hunger and poor nutrition are obvious barriers to learning. To help ensure that children and youth in transition are available for learning, 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, PART A**

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless of what school they attend. The trauma and instability of homelessness put students at sufficient risk of academic regression to warrant additional support. The district reserves such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those of Title I students to children and youth in transition attending non-participating schools.

The amount reserved is determined by a formula based upon the per-pupil Title I, Part A, expenditure and developed jointly by the local liaison and the Title I director. Reserved funds are used to provide education-related support services to children and youth in transition, in school

and outside of school, and remove barriers that prevent regular attendance.

Our district's Title I plan will be coordinated with our McKinney-Vento services by the Title I director. Children and youth in transition will be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education Regulations and Policy Guidance.

## **TRAINING**

Training and sensitivity/awareness activities will be conducted for the following LEA and school staff at least once each year: principals, assistant principals, federal program administrators, registrars, school secretaries, school counselors, school social workers, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, school nurses, and teachers. The trainings and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to children and youth in transition.

The local liaison for Marion County School District will lead and coordinate their schools' compliance with this policy and will receive training from the Director of Federal Programs and the Mississippi Dept. of Education annually.

## **COORDINATION**

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

## **PRESCHOOL**

Preschool education is an essential element of later academic success. Children in transition have experienced many difficulties accessing preschool opportunities. To facilitate preschool enrollment and attendance, the provisions of this procedural manual will apply to preschools administered by our school district. Our district will ensure that children in transition receive priority enrollment in preschool 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 local liaison will collaborate with preschool programs to ensure that children in transition can access those programs.

## **REFERENCES**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§11431-11436.

Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§6311-6315

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§1400 et seq.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, 42 U.S.C. §§1751 et seq.

June 5, 1992 Policy of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.