

ADMISSION, RETENTION AND GRADUATION OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

It is the intent of the Centennial BOCES Board of Directors to remove barriers to the enrollment, graduation, and retention of children and youth experiencing homelessness in school in accordance with the Title X McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, state and federal law.

Homeless Education Liaison (HEL)

The Board shall designate at least one staff member in Centennial BOCES to serve as a Homeless Education Liaison (HEL) and fulfill the duties set forth in state and federal law.

The Centennial BOCES HEL shall work with the member and partnering district's HEL to identify children experiencing housing instability and facilitate each homeless child's access to and success in school.

The Centennial BOCES HEL shall assist member and partnering districts to mediate disputes concerning school enrollment, assist in making transportation arrangements, assist in requesting the student's records, assist in providing information, resources, referrals on services and opportunities, and assist districts with any homeless child who is not in the custody of a parent or guardian with enrollment decisions, attendance and credit accrual.

The Centennial BOCES HEL will serve preschool to high school aged children.

The Centennial BOCES HEL will disseminate public notices and educational rights posters of McKinney-Vento rights in locations frequented by parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth, in a manner, language and form understandable to parents, guardians and youth.

Annually, the Centennial BOCES HEL will obtain professional development through trainings and webinars and provide to school personal McKinney-Vento services, and other supports.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protections which must be administered for students and their living situation shall be treated as an education record.

Enrollment and Full Participation of Students Experiencing Homelessness

Students defined in state and federal law as homeless children shall be admitted without payment of tuition to all Centennial BOCES schools/programs.

As used in this policy, the term "school of origin" means the school the student attended at the time of becoming homeless. If the student became homeless at a time when the student was not in school, the last school attended shall be the school of origin.

A homeless student currently living outside of the district in which the school of origin is located may be deemed to reside, and may attend school in:

- the district where the child is presently located, or
- the district in which the school of origin is located; except a homeless student who becomes permanently housed outside the district during the school year may only continue for the remainder of the year.

In determining the best interests of the homeless student, except when it is against the wishes of the student's parent or guardian, Centennial BOCES shall keep the homeless student in the school of origin to the extent feasible.

If Centennial BOCES sends the homeless student to a school other than the school of origin or to a school other than the one requested by the student's parent or guardian, Centennial BOCES shall provide written explanation to the parent or guardian, including the right to appeal the decision.

If a homeless student is not in the custody of a parent or guardian, the Centennial BOCES HEL shall assist with enrollment decisions, consider the wishes of the student, and give the student notice of the right to appeal.

If an enrollment dispute arises between the homeless student's parent or guardian and Centennial BOCES, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school selected by the parent or guardian until the dispute is resolved.

In the case of a dispute, written explanations must be provided regarding decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by Centennial BOCES, including the right to appeal.

Enrollment shall be immediate even if the student; lacks records routinely required prior to enrollment, missed application deadlines, or enrolled during testing times. Centennial BOCES shall then make arrangements to obtain any necessary records and offer the student the opportunity to receive immunizations.

Student information will be kept confidential to prevent stigmatization and isolation. Students will not be isolated into a specific program or group for students experiencing housing transition.

Students will be automatically offered the free meals program, without having to complete the Free and Reduced Price School Meals application and verification form.

Transportation

If the student resides in the district where the school of origin is located, the district shall, upon request, provide or arrange for the student's transportation to and from school.

If the student attends the school of origin but seeks shelter or is located in another district, both districts must, upon request, either agree on a method to apportion cost and responsibility for the student's transportation or share the cost and responsibility equally.

Transportation, General, and Title I Part A Homeless set aside funds may be used for transportation purposes.

Services

Each homeless child who lacks a permanent address shall be provided services for which the child is eligible, comparable to services provided to other students in the school, regardless of residency, including transportation services, education services, specialized services, Title services, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, and school nutrition programs.

The Centennial BOCES HEL is authorized to affirm whether children and youth meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness, to qualify for the HUD homeless assistance programs. The Centennial BOCES HEL must refer homeless families and students to housing services, in addition to other services.

The Centennial BOCES HEL works with state academic achievement standards to help remove barriers preventing students from receiving full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at a prior school.

Students must receive assistance from school counselors to advise, prepare and improve their readiness for college and career.

For youth who are unaccompanied and homeless, the Centennial BOCES HEL will work with district high school counselors to approve students for the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84), which is their Independent Status on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application.

Attendance issues will be proactively addressed. School staff will involve students in the identification of educational barriers and in making needed adjustments for students' academic success.

To remove educational barriers, the Coordinator of Title I Part A Homeless set aside funds, the Centennial BOCES HEL, and the Business Director/Accountant will collaborate to secure resources needed to support the academic success of students without stable homes. Centennial BOCES staff will be informed of Title IA set aside amounts, allowable expenditures and the process for accessing these funds.

Children without homes shall be provided access to education and other services that such children need to ensure they have an opportunity to meet the same student performance standard to which all students are held.

The phrase "awaiting foster care placement" will be deleted from the definition of homelessness in the McKinney-Vento Act. The Centennial BOCES HEL will work with the districts' Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL), Title I administrators, and the local child welfare agency/county department of human services to ensure youth in foster care are enrolled and continue in their school of origin, when in their best interest, which will be provided, arranged and funded available under section 475(4)(A) of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The LEA will be reimbursed by the child welfare agency, LEA will pay the cost, or the LEA will agree to share the cost.

Options and Opportunities

Students will be offered barrier free educational pathways to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet schools, summer schools, career and technical education, advanced placement, alternative high schools, on-line learning and charter school programs.

The Centennial BOCES HEL will coordinate with districts' preschool programs and other local preschool programs, such as Head Start, to ensure McKinney-Vento preschool students are enrolled, engaged and succeed in preschool.

Centennial BOCES shall coordinate with local social services agencies or programs providing services to homeless children as needed.

- Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), food stamps
- County human services
- Food banks
- Community service agencies and faith-based community services

LEGAL REFS.: 42.U.S.C. §11431 et seq. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015
C.R.S. 22-1-102.5 definition of homeless child
C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1)(dd)(duty to adopt/revise policies to remove barriers to access and success in schools for homeless children
C.R.S. 22-33-103.5 attendance of homeless children
C.R.S. 26-5.7-101 et seq. Homeless Youth Act

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Centennial BOCES