

Policy IGBCA: PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

Status: ADOPTED

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(Students in Transition)

The Riverview Gardens School District Board of Education recognizes that homeless students (also known as "students in transition") are particularly vulnerable and need special assistance to access and benefit from the education environment. Therefore, the district, in accordance with state and federal law and the Missouri state plan for education of the homeless, will give special attention to ensure that students in transition in the district are promptly identified and have access to a free and appropriate public education and related support services.

Eligibility for Services

Students in transition are individuals 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; or are abandoned in hospitals.
2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a 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.

District Liaison for Students in Transition

The board designates the following individual to act as the district's liaison for students in transition (liaison for students in transition):

Students in Transition Coordinator
9865 Winklea Drive
St. Louis, MO 63136

The liaison for students in transition shall designate and train another district employee to serve as the liaison for students in transition in the absence of the liaison for students in transition.

School of Origin

For the purposes of this policy, "school of origin" is defined as the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a public preschool. When the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term shall then include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

Enrollment

The selected school shall immediately enroll the student in transition even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization or other health records, proof of residency, or other documentation, and even if the student has missed any application or enrollment deadlines during any period of transition. Students will be awarded appropriate credit for full or partial coursework in accordance with board policy. Outstanding fines, fees or absences shall not present a barrier to enrollment of the student. However, the district may require a parent/guardian of a student in transition to submit contact information.

Placement

The district will consider the best interest of the student in transition , with parental involvement, in determining whether the student should be enrolled in the school of origin or the school that students not in transition who live in the attendance area in which the student in transition is actually living are eligible to attend. In determining the best interest of the student, the district will:

1. Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parents/guardians or the student if unaccompanied by a parent/guardian.
2. Consider student-centered factors related to the student's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety of students in transition, giving priority to the request of the parents/guardians of a student in transition or the unaccompanied youth.

The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the student in transition lives with a parent/guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere. If the student is unaccompanied, the liaison for students in transition shall assist the student in placement or enrollment decisions, give priority to the views of the student and provide the student with notice of the student's right to appeal the district's decision.

If the district determines that placement should be in the school of origin, the student will continue to be educated in the school of origin for the duration of the transition when the student's family begins the transition between academic years or during an academic year, and for the remainder of the academic year even if the student becomes permanently housed during the academic year.

If the district determines that it is not in the best interest of the student to attend either the school of origin or the school requested by the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth, the district shall provide a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be given in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth and shall include information regarding the right to appeal the district's determination.

The written explanation will include:

1. A description of the action proposed or refused by the district;
2. An explanation of why the action was proposed or refused;
3. A description of any other options the district considered;
4. The reasons other options were rejected;
5. A description of any other relevant factors to the district's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination, including the facts and evidence relied upon and their sources;
6. Appropriate timelines to ensure any relevant deadlines are not missed; and
7. Contact information for the local liaison and the state coordinator for students in transition (state coordinator) and a brief description of their respective roles.

Services

Each student in transition shall be provided services comparable to the services offered to other students in the district including, but not limited to, transportation services; education services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as education programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and gifted students; programs in career and technical education; school nutrition programs; preschool programs; before- and after-school care programs; and programs for English learners. Students in transition will not be segregated in a separate school or program within a school based on the students' status as being in transition.

The district will coordinate services for students in transition with local social service agencies and other agencies or entities providing services to students in transition and their families, including services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. The district will also coordinate transportation, transfer of school records and other activities with other school districts.

Unaccompanied Youths

An unaccompanied youth is a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. The liaison will work with unaccompanied youths on issues unique to their situations, such as informing them of their status as independent students under laws applicable to higher education and informing them that they may obtain assistance from the liaison for students in transition to receive verification of this status for the purposes of applying for federal student aid.

The liaison for students in transition, a school counselor or a school social worker will verify, when applicable, that a student is an unaccompanied youth as defined in federal law.

Transportation

If the school of origin for a student in transition, including a public preschool, and temporary housing are located in the Riverview Garden School District, the district will provide transportation to and from the school of origin at the request of the parents/guardians or liaison for students in transition, provided it is in the best interest of the student.

If the school of origin for a student in transition and temporary housing are located in two different school districts, the districts may agree on a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing transportation to the school of origin. If no agreement is reached, the districts will equally share the responsibility and costs for transporting the student. If a student in transition becomes permanently housed in the middle of the school year, the district will continue to provide transportation to the school of origin for the remainder of the school year.

Transportation to the school of origin shall be provided even if a homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool moves to another district that does not provide a widely available or universal preschool.

Records

When a student in transition enrolls in the district or a district school, the district will immediately contact the school the student in transition last attended in order to obtain academic or other relevant records.

Any records ordinarily kept by the school for each student in transition (including immunization or other health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs) shall be maintained so that the district is equipped to provide the student with appropriate services, make necessary referrals and transfer records in a timely fashion when a student in transition enters a new school district. Copies of records shall be made available upon request to students or parents/guardians in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Information about a living situation for a student in transition shall be treated as a student education record and shall not be deemed to be directory information under FERPA.

Responsibilities of Liaison for Students in Transition

The liaison for students in transition will attend all required professional development and other technical assistance activities as determined appropriate by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The district shall inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with families of students in transition of the duties of the liaison for students in transition. The liaison for students in transition will ensure that:

1. Students in transition, including preschool-age children in transition and unaccompanied youths, are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Students in transition, including unaccompanied youths, are enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the district.
3. Families and students in transition, including unaccompanied youths, have access to and receive education services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and Early Head Start, early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and preschool programs administered by the district, as well as referrals to healthcare services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services based on their assessed needs.
4. The parents/guardians of students in transition are informed of the educational and related opportunities

available to their students and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their students.

5. Public notice of the educational rights of students in transition is disseminated in locations frequented by parents/guardians, youths and unaccompanied youths, including schools, family shelters, public libraries and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians and youths.
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law.
7. The parents/guardians of students in transition and unaccompanied youths are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation to the selected school.
8. Unaccompanied youths will be assisted in placement or enrollment decisions, their views will be considered, and they will be provided notice of the right to appeal.
9. School personnel providing services to students in transition and their parents/guardians receive professional development and other support.
10. Students who need to obtain immunizations or medical or immunization records will receive assistance.
11. The district collects and reports reliable, valid and comprehensive data to DESE regarding students in transition.
12. All high school students in transition receive information and individualized counseling regarding college readiness, college selection, the application process, financial aid and the availability of on-campus supports.
13. Every effort is made to enroll preschool-age children in transition in preschool if they are not already enrolled.

Disputes

Parents/Guardians or unaccompanied youths may appeal district decisions regarding eligibility, enrollment or placement. The district will make every effort to resolve complaints or disputes at the district level. The liaison for students in transition will provide the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth a written explanation of any decision related to school selection or enrollment, including the right to appeal such decisions, and inform the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth of the district's complaint resolution process when a question or complaint arises concerning the education of a student in transition.

1. If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth has a complaint regarding the education of a student in transition, the person must notify the liaison for students in transition. The liaison for students in transition serves as the intermediary between the student in transition and the school where the student is seeking enrollment. The liaison for students in transition shall provide a copy of or access to the district's policies addressing the education of students in transition and the district's complaint form to the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth.
2. The parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth can file a complaint in writing with the liaison for students in transition. The liaison for students in transition will provide a written resolution of the dispute or a plan of action within five days of the date the complaint was received by the liaison for students in transition. The parties may mutually agree to an extension of time; however, every effort should be made to resolve the complaint in the shortest possible time.
3. If the dispute is not resolved by the liaison for students in transition, the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth may file a written complaint with the superintendent or designee for review. The superintendent or designee will provide a written resolution or plan of action within five days of the date the complaint was received by the superintendent or designee. The parties may mutually agree to an extension of time; however, every effort should be made to resolve the complaint in the shortest amount of time.
4. If the dispute is not resolved at the superintendent level, the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth may file a written complaint with the board of education. The board will provide a written resolution of the dispute or a plan of action within 30 days of the date the complaint was received by the board. If the dispute is not resolved by the board in a manner satisfactory to the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth, an appeal may be brought to DESE in accordance with the state dispute resolution process, which the liaison for students

in transition will provide to the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth.

While the dispute process is ongoing, the student in question must be enrolled and allowed to fully participate in school activities as well as receive transportation, if requested, to the school in which the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth seeks enrollment.

The district shall make translators, interpreters or other support services available without charge and in the appropriate language to parents/guardians and unaccompanied youths who are English learners, use a native language other than English or need additional supports due to a disability.
