

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Policy #411.2

Waunakee Community School District

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All children and youth within the Waunakee Community School District experiencing homelessness are provided with equal access to the District's educational programs, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State of Wisconsin and District academic standards, and are not segregated or discriminated against on the basis of their status as homeless.

Definitions

- I. Students experiencing homelessness (hereafter referred to as Students in Transition) are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular and nighttime residence, which may include the following conditions:
 - A. Temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
 - B. Living in motels, hotels or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
 - C. Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters
 - D. Abandoned in hospitals
 - E. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
 - F. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings
 - G. Living as run-away children or children who are abandoned
 - H. Abandoned or forced out of homes by parents/guardians or caretakers
 - I. Living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples
- II. "Unaccompanied youth" are defined as students who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, including students who are runaways, abandoned or denied housing by their parents, and other youth without a legal or participating caregiver, who are living in situations that are not fixed, regular or adequate.
- III. School District of Origin is defined as the school and district the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.
- IV. School District of Residence is defined as an attendance-area school or district where the student is currently sleeping at night.
- V. Permanent Housing is defined as any signed lease or long-term approved living situation. However, stable housing may be a consideration in developing the transition plan for the student. The student's educational interests and the desire to have students engaged in their education within their district or school of residence are guiding factors.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Board and Superintendent designate the Director of Student Services and the Homeless Liaison to serve as the district's liaison for students in transition and their families.

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- I. The district's liaison shall coordinate with:
 - A. Local service agencies that provide services to children and youth in transition and their families
 - B. Other school districts on issues of records transfer and transportation
 - C. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies

- II. The district's liaison shall provide public notice of the educational rights of students in transition in schools, family shelters and other community service agencies.

- III. The district's liaison shall ensure that:
 - A. Children and youth in transition residing in the district are identified by the school
 - B. Children and youth in transition enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the District
 - C. Families, children and youth in transition receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services to ensure they make educational progress
 - D. The parent/guardian of a child and any unaccompanied youth in transition is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the child/youth
 - E. Public notice of the educational rights of children and youth in transition is disseminated where such children and youth receive services such as the schools, family shelters, and other community service organizations
 - F. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with legal requirements
 - G. The parent/guardian of a child and any unaccompanied youth in transition is fully informed of transportation services that may be available to them under the law and assist them in accessing such transportation services

- IV. The Director of Student Services shall:
 - A. Serve as a resource between districts in resolving conflicts or issues related to the shared financial responsibilities for transportation.
 - B. Serve as a designee for parents or others who have a complaint regarding district offers of service for students in transition.
 - C. Ensure compliance with all local, state or federal reporting related to students in transition.

WCSD McKinney-Vento Dispute Guidance

A child/youth who is experiencing homelessness has the right to remain at their school of origin (public school that the child attended when permanently housed, or the public school in which the child was last enrolled) or to attend any public school that other students who live in the attendance area are eligible to

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attend. If the student is eligible to attend more than one school, parents/caregivers or unaccompanied youth will have the option of choosing the school they wish to attend.

When a dispute arises over the school placement/enrollment, WCSD must:

1. Immediately enroll the student in the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution of the dispute, including all appeals.
 - a. When the appeals are pending, the student has the right to full participation in school programs and activities, transportation, lunch and fees waived.
2. The Homeless Liaison shall carry out the outlined WCSD dispute process:

Level 1- Informal Dispute to Homeless Liaison

1. The Homeless Liaison will make best efforts to resolve the dispute at Level 1
 - a. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth will receive a written explanation of the “Best Interest of the Student” letter. This letter will be sent from the District Homeless Liaison and will notify the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth of the notice of the decision.
 - i. The Homeless Liaison will keep a copy of this letter on file.
 - b. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth has the right to appeal this decision (written or verbally). If the dispute cannot be resolved at Level 1, the Homeless Liaison will proceed to Level 2.
 - c. The Homeless Liaison will provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with the appeal process forms which includes:
 - i. Student Placement Dispute Form
 - ii. Copy of the Dispute Process
 - d. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth must start the appeal process by completing and submitting “Student Placement Dispute Form” in writing, which requests for Level 2 dispute to the Director of Student Services.
 - i. The parent/guardian and/or unaccompanied youth can complete this form with the assistance from the Homeless Liaison.
 - ii. The Homeless Liaison will keep a copy of this letter on file.

Level 2- Formal Dispute to Director of Student Services

1. The Director of Student Services or designee, within five business days of receipt of the formal dispute will schedule to meet with the person(s) initiating the dispute, review the information and consider the best interest factors of the child.
2. After meeting with the person(s) initiating the dispute, the Director of Student Services or designee will schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth within ten business days.
 - a. Provide a written copy of the “Notice of Dispute Resolution” to parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.
 - i. The Homeless Liaison will keep a copy of this form on file.

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- b. If the request is denied by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, a notice of the right to appeal Level 2 decision and move to Level 3 with the Department of Public Instruction.

Level 3: Formal Dispute to the Department of Public Instruction

1. If a dispute is not resolved after going through WCSD dispute resolution process, the parent/caregiver or unaccompanied youth may send a request (in writing) for resolution to the State Superintendent's Office of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
 - a. Unresolved disputes should be sent to:
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707

Legal Ref: Section 118.13 Wisconsin Statutes
 McKinney-Vento Act 42 US Code §§11431-11435
 McKinney-Vento Act 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(3)(E)

Cross Ref: 347, Pupil Records
 411, Equal Educational Opportunities
 420, School Admissions
 422, School Attendance Areas
 433, Assignment of Students to Classes
 751, Student Transportation Services

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