

Esperanza Academy Charter High School Policy & Procedures for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Esperanza Academy is committed to educating homeless children and youth and will serve each homeless student according to the student's best interest and according to the The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001.

The following is the policy of the Congress regarding **The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001:**

(1) Each State educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.

(2) In any State that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the State's compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths, the State will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that homeless children and youths are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths.

(3) Homelessness alone is not sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.

(4) Homeless children and youths should have access to the education and other services that such children and youths need to ensure that such children and youths have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

Eligibility/Definitions

School personnel should make a determination of the student's homelessness based upon the following criteria:

1. Homeless Children and Youth: youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; living in motels, parks or campgrounds; or youth who have primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation by human beings; or children or youth living in cars,

abandoned buildings or substandard housing or similar situations; or migratory children because they are living in circumstances like those described above.

2. Unaccompanied Youth: youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Youth living on their own in any of the homeless situations described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act.

Budget

Esperanza Academy shall allot a budget to address homelessness under title 1. Any student deemed eligible for homelessness support shall qualify for uniform assistance, school supplies and/or transportation under this budget.

Referrals

All homelessness referrals will be processed through the Esperanza Academy Guidance Department. Counselors will serve as homeless liaisons, with Lead Counselor serving as primary LEA. School staff/faculty will be informed through beginning of the year training and at various points throughout the year via electronic correspondence of the policy and steps for referral. All necessary documents for referral will be accessible through the Esperanza Academy shared electronic drive. Staff needs only suspicion of homelessness to file a report.

Sensitivity

When a parent/guardian indicates that the student may be homeless, treat a family, child or unaccompanied youth with sensitivity to their privacy. The meeting should take place in a private area/office to ensure dignity and respect towards homeless parent/guardian and children/youth. Maintain the child's/youth's privacy when discussing any accommodations that need to be made. Build a trusting and **safe** relationship. Referrals will be accepted by the Guidance Department and shared with essential personnel in order to address student's needs, including but not limited to parents, administration, special education, nurse.

School Responsibility

Esperanza Academy's Homelessness Policy will be included in student handbooks and distributed annually. In addition, policy and procedure will be maintained on the school website and included in parent newsletters twice per year.

Reports regarding students experiencing homelessness will be completed and submitted to the Administration and Board of Trustees at the close of each semester. (Jan/June)

School Choice

Schools must allow parents/guardians/youth to choose a school in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Federal Homeless Act. Homeless children and youth may enroll in:

- a. The school the student attended when permanently housed (school of origin)
- b. The school in which the student was last enrolled (school of origin)
- c. Any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the homeless youth is actually living are eligible to attend (new neighborhood school)

Residency Requirements

Homelessness is a sensitive issue. In some cases, a student's homelessness will be apparent during registration (i.e., residing in a homeless shelter or "doubled-up" with a relative or friend.) School personnel should be alert and sensitive to the issue; however, Esperanza will identify and track its homeless student population according to federal guidelines.

Children and youth who have met the criteria of being homeless, even if unaccompanied by a guardian, must be given full and equal access to an appropriate public education and success in the educational program. The permanency and adequacy of the housing conditions will be considered when determining if a student is homeless.

School Registration of Homeless Students

Homeless children and youth shall be immediately enrolled in school, even if the child or youth lacks the records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency and other documentation. Esperanza Academy will contact the last school attended to obtain relevant academic and other records.

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in school:

- The homeless student shall be immediately admitted to the school in which the enrollment is sought pending the resolution of the dispute.
- The parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment including the right of the parent/guardian or student to appeal the decision.
- The student/parent or guardian shall be referred to the districts homeless liaison who shall carry out the appeal process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute and
- In the case of unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute.

If the district seeks to place a homeless child in a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent the school district shall inform that parent or unaccompanied youth of the right to appeal. The district shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with written notice including the contact information of the ECYEH Regional Coordinator:

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