



Education for Homeless Children and Youth Policy

Policy

It is the policy of the board to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational programs, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state of Pennsylvania academic standards, are not segregated on the basis of their status as homeless and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Amendments (Sec. 725) the term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youths who:

- Are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Are living in motels, hotels or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Are living in emergency shelters
- Are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement
- Having a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Runaway children or children who are abandoned
- Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definitions.

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parents in the case of unaccompanied youth the local educational agency liaison and the district liaison.

Enrollment

Agora a Cyber Charter School will immediately enroll the student, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment. [Sec. 722(g)(3)(C)(i)]. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. Sec. 722(g)(C)(ii)].

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in [school] such as:

- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as ESL or special education programs
- Programs for “at risk” students
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- Title I services
- Before and After school programs

Examples of Comparable Services in a virtual school:

- Bus passes to/from school outings and testing locations
- Lap top computer
- Wireless card
- Computer paper, ink
- Increased flexibility in teacher availability for support
- Phone cards to contact teacher and/or administration
- Pre-paid envelopes for any mailings necessary for school
- Monthly Internet Reimbursement
- Direct Internet Payment to Internet Provider or Facility, i.e. shelters

Disputes

Per the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Sec. 722(g)(3) if a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending.

The school will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer the parent or youth to the local liaison immediately. The local liaison will ensure that the student is enrolled in the school and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and will resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth will be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The local liaison will keep 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 may appeal the school’s decision as provided in the state’s dispute resolution process.

Professional Development for All School Staff

All administrators, teachers and employees of the school will be provided professional development on the identification, services and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless children and youth. All identified or suspected homeless children and youths will be referred to the school’s homeless liaison.

[School’s homeless liaison] is: Laura Mellott