

TYNGSBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY

HOMELESS STUDENTS

The goal of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (No Child Left Behind) is to ensure that each homeless child or youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including preschool programs, where applicable, as provided to other children and youth. Tyngsborough Public Schools shall ensure that every effort is made to comply with this legislation.

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school.

PROCEDURE

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters
4. Being abandoned in hospitals
5. Awaiting foster care placement
6. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
7. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings
8. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples
9. Unaccompanied youth¹ – youth under the age of 18 out of the physical custody of a parent or guardian

LIAISONS

The superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's liaison for homeless students and their families. The liaison's role is to assist homeless students enroll in school and ensure that they receive the educational services for which they are eligible. The liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. This liaison may have other duties within the school district.

ENROLLMENT

Tyngsborough Public Schools must immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment² – ie., school records, medical records or proof of residency.

To the extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin³ while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in a school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living, or other schools. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student pursuant to district policies. If homeless students lack immunization records, the student will be admitted under a personal exemption. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible so the student will not have to be excluded from school if there is an outbreak of an infectious disease. The district liaison will assist families in obtaining required immunizations. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought pending resolution of the dispute. The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth will be provided with both a written statement of the school placement decision and a notice of the right to appeal the decision. The district liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. The final decision in such a situation resides with the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education.

TRANSPORTATION

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the homeless student moves to another district, and continues his or her education at the school of origin, the two districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student. Districts can negotiate a reasonable means of apportioning this service, but if agreement is not reached, the costs must be shared equally. The guideline for providing transportation is one hour.

ACCESS TO COMPARABLE SERVICES

Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Title I, Special Education, MCAS remediation, ELL program, homework assistance, referral to counseling or medical services, school nutrition programs, including free lunch, and breakfast, if offered, etc.

DEFINITIONS

- ¹ Unaccompanied youth also includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing and children/youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as “throwaway” children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available. Incarcerated children/youth and children/youth in foster care are not considered homeless.
- ² Enrollment means enrolled and attending.
- ³ School of origin is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

APPROVED: JULY 12, 2005