

North Adams-Jerome Schools

Homeless Education Policy

Homelessness exists in Hillsdale County. A combination of housing costs and poverty cause many families to lose their housing. Many young people leave their homes due to abuse, neglect and family conflict. Children and youth who have lost their housing live in a variety of places including motels, shelters, shared residences, transitional housing programs, cars, campgrounds and others. Their lack of permanent housing can lead to potentially serious physical, emotional and mental consequences. The North Adams-Jerome School district will ensure that all children and youth receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools. Accordingly, this district will follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Since we view children and youth as individuals, this policy will not refer to children as homeless. Rather, it will instead use the term children and youth in transition.

Under federal law, children and youth in transition must have access to appropriate public education and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state- and district-wide assessments and accountability systems. Our schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation and harassment. Information regarding this policy will be distributed to students and posted within the district and on the district website.

Definitions

Children and youth in transition means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education and who lack a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime residence including:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for people.
- Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station or similar setting.
- Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth will be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.

Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

School of origin means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Local liaison is the staff person designated by the school as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Identification

In collaboration with school personnel and the community, the local liaison will identify children and youth in transition in the district. The local liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the local liaison.

The local liaison will also keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district, where they are living, and their individual needs.

School Selection

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and our school district. Keeping student in their school of origin enhances their academic and social growth, while permitting our schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity. Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools of origin to the extent possible, unless that is against the parent or youth's wishes. Students may remain at their school of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed.

Enrollment

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have school enrollment documents available readily. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment must enroll any child or youth in transition immediately. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment. Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caregiver, older sibling or local liaison.

Transportation

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her school of origin. To avoid such forced school transfers, at a parent's request, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school. The local liaison will request and arrange transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered only in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin.

If the student in transition is living in this district but attending school in another, or attending school in this district but living in another, this district will coordinate with the neighboring district to arrange transportation. Inter-district disputes will not result in a student in transition missing school.

Services

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school, including:

- Transportation
- Title I, Part A, services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, such as special education
- Vocational and technical education programs
- Before- and after-school programs

Free Meals

Hunger and poor nutrition are barriers to learning. To help ensure that children and youth in transition are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school or is identified, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the district nutrition office for immediate processing.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals and Title I while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises 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 requested 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 district may appeal the school district's decision as provided in the state's dispute resolution process.

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