
EDUCATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

Recognizing that homelessness is a serious social issue, and that homeless children and youth often face significant obstacles in accessing education, the Bangor School Department (the "Department") seeks to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal opportunity to a free appropriate public education in compliance with federal and state laws.

Definitions:

"Homeless children and youth" means students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- (1) children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar compelling reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (2) children or youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings,
- (3) children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (4) migratory children (as defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Educations Act of 1965, as amended) who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in this definition.

Children and youth who have a fixed, regular and adequate night time residency, but elect to share the housing of other persons who are not a parent or legal guardian, are not homeless students.

"Enroll" and "enrollment" include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

"Liaison" is the staff person designated by the Bangor School Department as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Act.

"Unaccompanied youth" includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The more general term "youth" also includes unaccompanied youth.

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



Equal Access:

Homeless students will have access to the education and services that are available to non-homeless students, to ensure that homeless students have the same opportunity to meet the academic standards that all students are held to. Homeless students will not be separated, segregated, stigmatized or isolated from the mainstream school environment on the basis of their homeless status. To the extent feasible, all services provided to homeless students will be provided within mainstream school programs. The Superintendent may authorize separation of a homeless student from the mainstream school programs if and when necessary for short periods of time due to a health and safety emergency, or to provide temporary, special and supplementary services to meet the unique needs of the homeless student.

Placement:

School placement decisions will be made by the Superintendent in the best interest of the homeless child or youth. Based upon the child's or youth's best interest, the Bangor School Department shall:

- (a) continue the student's education in the school of origin:
 - (i) for the duration of homelessness if a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or
 - (ii) for the remainder of the academic year if the student obtains permanent housing during an academic year.
- (b) enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

In determining the best interest of the child or youth, the Superintendent will, to the extent feasible, keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's parent/guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Superintendent shall consult with the Liaison when making a placement decision and shall consider the views of the unaccompanied youth.

The Superintendent will notify the parent/guardian of any decision to place a child in a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian. The Superintendent will provide the parent/guardian with a written explanation of the placement decision, and will inform the parent/guardian, in writing, of his/her right to appeal the placement decision. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Superintendent will provide the same written notice to the youth and the Liaison.

Enrollment:

A school within the Bangor School Department will immediately enroll a homeless child or youth if selected as the placement in the best interest of the child or youth. The Superintendent may authorize separation of a homeless student from the mainstream school programs if and when necessary for short periods of time due to a health and safety emergency, or to provide temporary, special and supplementary services to meet the unique needs of the homeless student. The school shall not be required to enroll the student if the student is presently expelled or serving a suspension imposed by the school of origin. If the student is unable to produce immunization, medical, academic or other



records normally required for enrollment, the Superintendent or his designee will immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant records. The child's parent/guardian will be required to supply contact information necessary for the Superintendent or Liaison to procure necessary records. If the student needs to obtain immunizations or records, the Superintendent will refer the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth to the Liaison. The Liaison will assist the youth or parent/guardian to obtain necessary immunizations or records.

Enrollment/Placement Dispute:

In the event of a dispute over school selection or enrollment, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which the parent/guardian seeks enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute. Immediate enrollment is not required in the case of a health or safety emergency or if the student is presently expelled or serving a suspension imposed by the school of origin. The parent/guardian or youth liaison shall be provided with a written explanation of the Department's decision, including notice of the right to appeal the decision. The Superintendent will refer the parent/guardian to the Liaison who will carry out the dispute resolution process expeditiously, in compliance with state and federal guidelines. The same process will be followed in the event of a placement or enrollment dispute between the school department and an unaccompanied youth. Enrollment disputes shall be handled according to applicable state dispute resolution processes.

Liaison:

The Bangor School Department has appointed a Liaison for Homeless Students and Youth. The Liaison's primary duty will be to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to all services for which they are eligible and a full opportunity to succeed in Bangor schools. The Liaison's duties will include, but not be limited to, outreach and identification of homeless children, provision of public notices concerning educational rights of homeless children and youths, education of children and their families as to the educational services and opportunities available to them, assistance with enrollment of homeless students and youth, assistance and facilitation of grievance or appeal processes as necessary, review of school policies and practices for compliance with state and federal guidelines, training of school personnel, and any other responsibilities as prescribed by the Bangor School Department and/or state and federal requirements.

Transportation:

Upon request of the parent/guardian or Liaison (in the case of an unaccompanied youth), the Bangor School Department will provide or arrange for transportation of homeless students to and from the student's school of origin. If the student is living and attending school in Bangor, the Department shall provide transportation consistent with local policy. In cases where the student is living outside the District and attending school in Bangor, or is living in Bangor and attending school outside Bangor, the responsibility for transportation and costs shall be determined by agreement between the Superintendent and the superintendent of the other district consistent with federal and state requirements. In the event of a dispute over costs or responsibility for transportation, such costs and responsibility shall be shared equally and the matter shall be resolved pursuant to available processes in compliance with state or federal regulations.



Title I Services:

Homeless children and youth shall receive Title I services and sufficient funds will be reserved to provide services in compliance with state and federal guidelines. Title I programs will be coordinated with McKinney-Vento services through collaboration between the Department's Title I director and the Liaison. Homeless children and youth shall be assessed, reported on and included in accountability systems as required by federal and state laws and regulations.

Special Education Services:

Homeless children and youth shall be evaluated and identified for special services in compliance with state and federal regulations. If a child or youth has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the Department shall implement it consistent with applicable regulations, and shall convene a Pupil Evaluation Team meeting (PET) as soon as practicable. Re-evaluations or reviews of the student's IEP shall be conducted as necessary. If complete records are not available, a PET shall be convened and shall determine the best course of action consistent with applicable federal and state regulations.

Policy Review:

The Superintendent, in coordination with the Liaison, shall initiate and oversee a process of review to develop and revise Department policies and practices to remove any barriers to the enrollment, retention and educational achievement of homeless children and youth. Policies and practices may be revised from time to time to comply with state and federal requirements.

ADOPTED: January 21, 2003

