



ST. HOPE PUBLIC SCHOOLS HOMELESS EDUCATION POLICY

St. HOPE Public Schools (SHPS) believes that homeless students should have access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students within SHPS. SHPS shall provide homeless students with access to education and other services necessary for them to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students and will not stigmatize or segregate homeless youth on the basis of their status.

DEFINITIONS

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) (42 U.S.C. § 11431-11435) is federal legislation that ensures the educational rights and protections of children and youths experiencing homelessness. It requires all local educational agencies (LEAs) to ensure that homeless students have access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschools, as provided to other children and youths. The McKinney-Vento Act defines LEAs as public school districts, direct-funded and locally funded charter schools, and county offices of education.

Homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes:

- Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Children and youths who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters or are abandoned in hospitals
- Children and youths 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
- Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, or
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above

Unaccompanied youth includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. A child or unaccompanied youth shall be considered homeless for as long as he/she is in a living situation described above.

GENERAL ASSURANCES

St. HOPE Public Schools provides the following general assurances:

- Homeless children and youth shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way.
- Homeless children and youth shall be provided services comparable to those received by other students in the school, including transportation services, and education programs for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title 1 or similar state and local programs; programs for students with disabilities; programs for students with limited English proficiency; vocational or technical programs; gifted and talented programs; and school nutrition programs.
- Homeless children and youth will have access to LEA administrative level reservation of funds (set-asides) for serving homeless students.

- SHPS shall provide homeless students with access to education and other services necessary for these students to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students.
- SHPS shall provide and post notices of the educational rights of homeless children and youth.
- SHPS shall inform parents/guardians of homeless students of their educational and related opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

HOMELESS LIAISON

Each SHPS school has a designated homeless liaison to carry out the assigned duties under 42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6].

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The Homeless Liaison shall ensure that:

1. Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][i])
2. Homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][ii])
3. Homeless children, youths, and their families have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible for, including Head Start, Early Intervention Program for Infant and Toddlers and preschool programs. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][iii])
4. Homeless children, youths, and their families receive referrals to services for health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other appropriate services. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][iv])
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][vi]; EC Section 48852.5)
6. Enrollment, school selection, and eligibility disputes are mediated. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][vii])
7. Homeless children, youths, and their families are provided with information on and assistance in accessing transportation, including to and from the school of origin. (42 U.S.C. Sections 11432[g][6][A][viii], 11432[g][1][J][iii])
8. School personnel that provide services to homeless children, youths, and their families receive professional development and other support. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][A][ix]; EC Section 48852.5[c])
9. Coordination occurs with state, community, and school personnel to provide education and related services to homeless children and youths. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][C])
10. The LEA collects and provides to the State Coordinator reliable, valid, and comprehensive data regarding homeless education. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][6][C])

NOTIFICATION

The LEA must provide parents/guardians with information on school and parent activities in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand. (20 U.S.C. Section 6318[e][5]; 42 U.S.C. Section 11432[e][3][C][iii]) If 15 percent or more of a student body speaks a primary language other than

English, as determined by the previous year's language census data, all notices, reports, statements, records sent to parents of such students must be written in English and the primary language. (EC Section 48985)

SHPS shall notify parents/guardians of homeless youth of their rights through multiple means, which may include:

- The school's website
- The parent/student handbook
- Annual data collection forms (optional)
- The enrollment process

IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING

Homeless children and youth will be identified through:

1. The application process for enrollment (self-identification)
2. School personnel recommendations
3. Coordinated activities with other entities and agencies
4. The school's annual data collection process (optional form)

SHPS will comply with all federal, state, county (Sacramento County), and other data collections and reporting requirements regarding homeless children and youth.

SCHOOL SELECTION

Homeless students have a right to select from the following schools:

- The school he/she attended when permanently housed (School of Origin)
- The school in which he/she was last enrolled (School of Origin)
- The school in the attendance area in which the student currently resides (School of Residency)

A homeless child or youth's right to attend their school of origin extends for the duration of homelessness. If a child or youth becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he or she is entitled to stay in the school of origin for the remainder of the academic year.

ENROLLMENT AND RECORDS

Homeless students may be identified at the time of enrollment (through self-reports). As all SHPS schools are independent charter schools, and therefore schools of choice rather than assigned district schools, placement decisions are based solely on parent requests through the application process.

Homeless youth will not be discriminated against in the application process. Homeless children and youth will be allowed to apply for enrollment in accordance with current SHPS enrollment policies even if the parent/guardian is unable to provide the school with the records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, birth certificate, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation. The SHPS designee shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain the relevant records. If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the homeless liaison. The liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall assist in the enrollment process. Unaccompanied youth shall be immediately enrolled if space is available even if unable to provide the school with the records normally required for enrollment (as above), and despite lack of parent or legal guardian's supervision or permissions, or "power of attorney" by a supervising adult.

In accordance with current SHPS enrollment policies and state regulations regarding charter schools, if the grade level for which a homeless child or youth has applied has more applicants than spaces available, a random public lottery will take place once annually in order to determine enrollment for the following school year. An “in-district” priority will apply during the lottery to homeless youth who self-identify as homeless during the lottery application process as to not discriminate against homeless children or youth due to lack of permanent housing. If a homeless child or youth applies for admission after the annual random public lottery, he or she will be placed on the waitlist in the order in which the application was received, even if the application is incomplete at the time of submission.

Any confidential record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, of each homeless child or youth will be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school or school district.

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, information about the living situation of a child or youth experiencing homelessness is not deemed to be directory information; rather it is considered a student education record and must be provided with the applicable confidentiality protections [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(G)].

ENROLLMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

(per CDE Homeless Education “Dispute Resolution Letter” - <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>)

As part of the ESSA, one of the provisions of the law allows the LEA the option to question, confirm, and dispute the eligibility of a family’s homelessness. The LEA’s decision, in reference to eligibility for supports and services related to homeless education, requires a review of facts, witnesses, and evidence related to the definition of homelessness. [42 United States Code Section 11434A(2)(A); California *Education Code* Section 48850(d)]

- If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, then the child, youth, or unaccompanied youth must be immediately enrolled in the school in which he/she is seeking enrollment, pending the final decision of the dispute resolution.
- The school must refer the student, parent, or guardian to the LEA’s homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible. The homeless liaison must ensure that the dispute resolution process is also followed for unaccompanied youth. The homeless liaison should assist the student, parent, or guardian in preparing the dispute and make available school resources including copying, mailing, or obtaining records.
- A written explanation of the LEA’s decision regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment must be provided, including the right to appeal to the COE. The written explanation shall be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language that the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand.
- If the decision is appealed by either party (LEA, parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth), then the homeless liaison shall forward all documentation to the COE’s homeless liaison. The COE homeless liaison should have only five (5) working days to resolve the dispute decision. A written explanation of the COE’s decision must be provided to all parties involved with the right to appeal to the CDE Homeless Education Program.
- If the decision is appealed by either party (LEA, parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth), then the COE homeless liaison shall forward all documentation and related paperwork to the CDE Homeless Education Program. Upon the review of all parties information, the CDE will notify all parties of the final determination of eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal. The CDE Homeless Education Program can be reached by phone at 866-856-8214 or by email at HOMELESSED@cde.ca.gov

SERVICES

The LEA must reserve Title I, Part A, funds as are necessary to provide services to homeless children and youths that are comparable to services provided to children in schools funded under the provisions of Title I, Part A. (20 U.S.C. Section 6313[c][3][A][i]). Services include:

- Transportation (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][4][A])
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets federal, state, and local program eligibility criteria. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][4][B])
- Career and technical education (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][4][C]) (not applicable to SHPS schools)
- Gifted and talented education (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][4][D])(not applicable to SHPS schools)
- School nutrition programs (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][4][E])

Transportation

Per the McKinney-Vento Act, LEAs must provide services to homeless children/youth that are comparable to those received by other students in the school selected, including transportation. In addition, schools must provide transportation for homeless students to and from their school of origin, if feasible.

SHPS, where feasible, applicable, at the request of the parent/guardian and/or in the best interest of the homeless children and youth, shall provide transportation to students experiencing homelessness to ensure the students are able to stay at the SHPS school of their choice for the duration of their homelessness. SHPS may work with the youth's district of residence or other agencies to provide transportation services.

School Nutrition Programs

Homeless students automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch. Families do not have to fill out an application or provide proof of income. Homeless students will be added to the free meals program as soon as they have been identified.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The LEA shall deem a homeless student, immediately, to meet all residency requirements for participation in interscholastic sports or other extracurricular activities. (EC Section 48850[a][2])

COURSEWORK, CREDITS AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

When a homeless student transfers into another LEA, the LEA shall:

1. Accept and issue full credit for any coursework that the student has satisfactorily completed and shall not require the student to retake the course. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][1][F][ii]; EC Section 51225.2)
2. Issue partial credit for any coursework when the student did not complete the entire course, and allow the student to take the uncompleted portion. (42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g][1][F][ii]; EC Section 51225.2)
3. When a homeless student who has completed his/her second year of high school transfers to another high school, he/she shall be:
 - a. Exempt from that district-established graduation requirements, unless the LEA finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements and graduate by the end of the 4th year. (EC Section 51225.1)
 - b. Notified by the LEA, along with educational rights' holder, within 30 calendar days, of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for it. (EC Section 51225.1)