

Each school in the district shall maintain forms provided by the Commissioner of Education designating a homeless child's district of attendance. These forms must be provided to any homeless child or parent or guardian who seeks to enroll a child in school. The district's liaison for homeless students shall assist the homeless child and/or parent or guardian in understanding their rights under the law and provide them with information regarding the educational and related opportunities available to them.

School placement decisions for homeless children will be based on the "best interest of the child" and shall consider student-centered factors such as the effect of mobility on student achievement, education, health and safety. Unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's parent or guardian, to the extent possible, a homeless child will continue to attend the school of origin (the school the child attended when he or she became homeless).

If the district wishes to send a homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the parent or guardian or child, if an unaccompanied youth, with a written explanation of its decision, together with a statement regarding the right to appeal the placement, which shall be in a manner and form understandable to them. The Superintendent or designee shall refer any such dispute to the district's liaison for the homeless for resolution. The homeless child must be enrolled in the school sought by the parent or guardian pending resolution of the dispute including all available appeals.

Admission Procedures

Upon designation, the Superintendent or designee shall immediately:

- review the designation form to ensure that it is complete;
- admit the homeless child even if the child or his/her parent or guardian is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, or the student has missed application or enrollment deadlines, or there is an unresolved dispute regarding school selection or enrollment;
- where applicable, make a written request to the school district where a copy of the child's records are located for a copy of the homeless child's school records;
- notify the liaison for homeless children of the child's admission. The liaison shall:
 - ✓ notify the child and/or the parent or guardian of the educational and related opportunities available to homeless children including transportation;
 - ✓ ensure that the child receives the educational services for which they are eligible including Head Start and Early Head Start and preschool programs administered by the district;

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- ✓ make necessary referrals for the homeless children or their families to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services; and
- ✓ ensure that any enrollment disputes are mediated promptly and in accordance with law.

The Superintendent or designee shall forward a copy of the designation form to the Commissioner of Education and the school district of origin where applicable.

Transportation

Unless the homeless child is entitled to transportation provided by the Department of Social Services or Office of Children and Family Services, the district shall provide transportation services to the child in accordance with applicable law. A designated school district that must provide transportation to a homeless child is not required to provide transportation in excess of 50 miles one way, unless the Commissioner of Education determines that it is in the best interest of the child.

Transportation must be provided when the district receives notice of a child's homeless status, as well as during the pendency of disputes. If a child is receiving transportation to his/her school of origin and obtains permanent housing during the school year, the student has the right to continued transportation services to the school of origin until the end of the academic year, as well as if the student completes the final grade level in a building, or attends the designated receiving school at the next level.

Dispute Resolution Process

If, after the Superintendent reviews the designation form (STAC-202), he/she finds that the student is either not homeless, not entitled to attend the district's school, or not entitled to transportation (if requested) the Superintendent or designee will do the following:

- contact the district's homeless liaison to assist in dispute resolution process;
- contact the student and parent (if available) and inform them of their opportunity to provide more information prior to the district making a final determination.

If, after consideration of any additional information input from the homeless liaison, and the Superintendent makes a final determination that a student is not homeless, or not entitled to enrollment or transportation, he/she must provide the student's parent or guardian, or the student, if the student is an unaccompanied youth, with written notice that the student is not entitled to their request. This written notice must also:

- state the rationale/basis for the district's determination;
- state the date as of which the student will be excluded from the district's schools (or transportation);
- advise that the district's final determination may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education;
- provide the name and contact information for the district's homeless liaison;
- inform the student's parent or guardian or the student, if the student is an unaccompanied youth, that the district's homeless liaison is required to assist him/her in filing such an appeal; and
- include as an attachment the form petition needed to file an appeal to the Commissioner.

The Superintendent must ensure that the district's final decision is delivered to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in a timely manner. The student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if requested) until the district makes a final determination and for a minimum of 30 days after the determination to give the student's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth the opportunity to appeal to the Commissioner.

If the parent/guardian or student commences an appeal to the Commissioner ~~with a stay application~~ within 30 days of the final determination, the homeless child or youth will be permitted to continue to attend the school he or she is enrolled in at the time of the appeal and/or receive transportation to that school until the Commissioner renders a decision.