

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to identify homeless children within the district, encourage their enrollment and eliminate existing barriers to their education which may exist in district practices. The Board will provide homeless children attending the district's schools with access to the same free and appropriate public education and other school programs and activities, including preschool education, as other children.

A homeless child is a child who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or who has a primary nighttime location in a public or private shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, or a place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. This definition also includes a child who shares the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; lives in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; lives in a car, park, public space or abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station or similar setting; has been abandoned in a hospital or is awaiting foster care placement; or is a migratory child who qualifies as homeless. An unaccompanied youth is a homeless child for whom no parent or person in parental relation is available.

A homeless child has the right to attend school in either the school of origin, i.e., where he/she resided before becoming homeless, or the school he/she was last enrolled in, the school in the district of current location, i.e., where he/she currently resides as a result of his/her homelessness that he/she is entitled to attend based on attendance zone or general eligibility, or a school in a district participating in a regional placement plan. Such schools include preschools. The homeless child is entitled to attend the designated school on a tuition-free basis for the duration of his or her homelessness. If the child becomes permanently housed, the child is entitled to continue to attend the same school building until the end of the school year and for one additional year if that year constitutes the child's terminal year in such building. If a homeless child completes the final grade level in his/her school of origin, the child may also attend the designated receiving school at the next grade level.

The Superintendent/designee shall develop procedures necessary to expedite the homeless child's access to the designated school. Such procedures shall include:

1. Admission: Upon designation, the district shall immediately admit the homeless child to school, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical or immunization records, proof of age or residency or other documentation and even if there is a dispute with the child's parents regarding school selection or enrollment. During a dispute, the student may continue attending the school until final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. Homeless children will have the same opportunity as other children to enroll in and succeed in the district's schools. They will not be placed in separate schools or programs based on their status as homeless. The district shall eliminate barriers to identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees, fines or absences.
2. Transportation: The district shall provide transportation for homeless students currently residing within the district as required by applicable law, as described in the accompanying regulation.
3. School Records: For homeless students attending school out of the district, the district shall, within five days of receipt of a request for records, forward a complete copy of the homeless child's records including proof of age, academic records, evaluation, immunization records and guardianship paper, if practicable. For homeless students attending school in the district, the district shall request the student's records (academic, medical, etc.) from the school the student last attended.
4. Coordination: The district shall coordinate with local social services agencies and other entities providing services to homeless children and their families for the provision of services to homeless children, and shall coordinate with other school districts on issues of prompt identification, transportation, transfer of records, and other inter-district activities. This shall include ensuring the provision of appropriate services to homeless students with disabilities who are eligible for services under either Section 504 or IDEA.

Information about a homeless child's living situation shall be treated as a student education record, and shall not be deemed to be directory information under FERPA (see policy 5500).

The Superintendent shall also designate a liaison for homeless children and ensure that this person is aware of his or her responsibilities under the law. The Superintendent shall ensure that the liaison receives appropriate professional development on identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students, including the definitions of terms related to homelessness. The liaison's responsibilities shall include, but not be limited to, ensuring that:

1. parents or guardians of homeless children are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
2. parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services available to them, and are assisted in accessing them;
3. enrollment disputes involving homeless children are promptly mediated and resolved;

4. school personnel, through outreach and in coordination with shelters and social service agencies and other appropriate entities, identify homeless children, including homeless preschoolers;
5. homeless children receive educational services, including Head Start and preschool services to which they are eligible, as well as referrals to health care and other appropriate services for homeless children and their families;
6. public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated in locations frequented by homeless unaccompanied youth and parents/guardians of homeless children, in a manner and form understandable to them;
7. staff who provide services to homeless students receive required professional development and support on identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students;
8. homeless unaccompanied youth are informed of their rights, are enrolled in school, and have opportunities to meet the same state standards set for all students, including receiving credit for full or partial coursework earned in a prior school pursuant to Commissioner's regulations.

In accordance with law and regulation, the district will offer a prompt dispute resolution process (described in more detail in the accompanying regulation - 5111-R).

In accordance with Commissioner's regulations, the district shall collect and transmit to the Commissioner information necessary to assess the educational needs of homeless children within the State.

Date of Board Adoption: September 27, 2016  
Johnson City Central School District, Johnson City, New York