

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
HOMELESS
CHILDREN AND YOUTH
EDUCATION PROGRAM**

David Sewell
SUPERINTENDENT

Derrick Morris
HOMELESS PROGRAM LIAISON

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
HOMELESS PLAN/PROCEDURES
AND
DISPUTE RESOLUTION**



Approved by: Superintendent



Date

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
ADMISSION POLICY FOR HOMELESS, MIGRANTS, AND ELL STUDENTS

Pursuant to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, Plyler vs. Doe, 457 U.S. 202, (1982), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, all homeless children, immigrants, foster care, and English language learners must have equal access to the same free appropriate public education, including public preschool education, provided other children and youth. This shall be the policy of the Houston County School System. Such children will be provided the opportunity to meet the same challenging state content and state student performance standards to which all students are held without being stigmatized or isolated.

The enrollment of homeless, migrant, and limited English proficient children and youth shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records
- Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Unaccompanied; no guardian

*State approved policy for homeless children attached.

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
HOMELESS PLAN/PROCEDURES
AND
DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Introduction

The Houston County School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of the Homeless Education program. The school/district shall notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources.

The Houston County School System shall conduct an annual evaluation (**Appendix E**) of its Homeless Education program to determine the effectiveness of the program. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement.

DEFINITION:

For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Houston County School System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines **homeless children and youth** (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

- Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
 - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
 - living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - living in emergency or transitional shelters;
 - abandoned in hospitals; or
 - awaiting foster care placement.
- Children and 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.
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

The term *unaccompanied youth* includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing and children, youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as “throwaway” children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available.

The *school of origin* is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN

Purpose of the Program

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. The program will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academic and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non-homeless students.

The program provides procedural guidelines **to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrollment. Homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, will be enrolled immediately pending obtainment of the necessary documents.** The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining the proper documentation.

The homes education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the *school of origin* and providing them with transportation to and from the school of origin. Provisions are made for parents/guardians, or unaccompanied youth to request or decline enrollment in the *school of origin*.

The program provides for a homeless liaison that will ensure program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, are provided the opportunity for academic success.

Identification & Registration Procedures

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The district will conduct awareness training sessions with the appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without using stigmatizing terminology. The district will use a *Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A)* to facilitate identity of homeless children and youth and preschoolers. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will complete the *Residency Questionnaire* at the time of registration. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the *Residency Questionnaire* must be submitted to the Houston County Schools Homeless Liaison on the day of registration for students identified as homeless. The school will maintain the original form in a file separate from the student's permanent record for audit purposes during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor's office. Currently enrolled students who may become homeless may be identified through school personnel observation as well as through referrals from outside sources.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth with or without (**Appendix F**) proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record, or school records. The school counselor or principal's designee will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the necessary records and documents for enrollment. Enrollment without the required immunization record will be pending receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation. The existing method of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll himself or herself. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the Houston County Schools Homeless Liaison to report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in language that the student understands. The Houston County Schools Homeless Liaison (**Appendix B**) and school personnel will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services.

Meal Status

The application process for free and reduced priced meals can be expedited for homeless children and youth. The determination for free meals may be made without completing the full application process (source: U.S. Department of Agriculture: http://www.nlchp.org/FA_Education/new_usda_memo.pdf).

Identification of Homeless Preschoolers

The Houston County Schools Homeless Liaison will collaborate with local community service agencies (e.g. Head Start, Department of Human Resources, Health Department, faith-based organizations and the court system, etc.) and school personnel to identify homeless preschoolers. The district will also include homeless preschoolers and homeless children in the "Child Find" process as required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act. **Appendix G** is posted at all schools, the central office, and other appropriate sites.

School Placement

The school system will make school placement decisions in the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth. Students will be given the opportunity to continue in the *school of origin* for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. Students may enroll 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.

Dispute Resolution

Homeless Program Dispute Resolution Policy and Process

A parent/guardian of a homeless student has the right to enroll his/her student in either the "school of origin," which may be the last school attended by the student when permanently housed (if in the best interest of the homeless student) or the school which serves the location where the student currently resides. The school must provide the parent/guardian, or unaccompanied student, written information regarding school selection or enrollment options available to homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act.

If a school selection or enrollment dispute develops over the selection or enrollment options available pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, the school must immediately enroll the homeless student to the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent/ guardian, pending resolution of the dispute. In the case of an unaccompanied student, the district homeless coordinator will ensure that the student is immediately enrolled in the school pending resolution of the dispute.

In order to initiate the dispute resolution process, the Houston County Schools Dispute Resolution Form must be completed and filed with the principal of the school wherein the student is currently enrolled.

After receipt of the Dispute Resolution Form, the school principal shall meet with the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student in an effort to resolve the school selection or enrollment dispute. If a school selection or enrollment resolution is not reached at the school level, the school principal will notify the Houston County Schools homeless coordinator of the dispute, and refer the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student to the district homeless coordinator.

The district's homeless coordinator shall meet with the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student in an effort to resolve the school selection or enrollment dispute. Within ten (10) business days of the meeting, the district's homeless coordinator shall provide the parent/ guardian or unaccompanied student a written decision regarding the school selection or enrollment decision.

If the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student is not satisfied with the decision the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student has the right to file a written complaint with the Alabama State Department of Education. The LEA Homeless Coordinator will assist with this process if requested to do so.

The written complaint can be mailed or delivered to:

Alabama Department of Education
Federal Programs Section
50 North Ripley Street
5348 Gordon Persons Building
Montgomery, Alabama 36104-2101
Attn: Homeless Program Specialist

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS RESIDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

1. Where is the student currently living?

SECTION A		SECTION B	
	In a shelter?		The choices in Section A do not apply
	With more than one family in a house or apartment?	<i>If you checked this section, STOP here. You do not need to complete the remainder of this form. Submit the form to school personnel.</i>	
	In a motel, car, or campsite		
	With friends or family members (other than parent/guardian)		
<i>If you checked a box in Section A, CONTINUE to item number 2 and complete the remainder of this form.</i>			

2. The student lives with:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 parent | <input type="checkbox"/> a relative, friend(s) or other adult(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 parents | <input type="checkbox"/> alone with no adult(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 parent and another adult | <input type="checkbox"/> an adult that is not the parent or the legal guardian |

School _____

Name of Student _____ Male Female

Birth Date ____/____/____ Age _____ Social Security Number ____/____/____

Name of Parent(s) / Legal Guardian(s) _____

Address _____

E-911 Address (Street Address)

_____, _____ Telephone Number (____) ____ - ____
City State Zip Code

Signature of Parent(s) / Legal Guardian(s) _____

School Use Only – Do Not Write in this Space.

Section A Determination:

_____/_____
 Principal's Signature Date

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
HOMELESS LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES**

APPENDIX B

The homeless liaison shall work to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschoolers are identified, enrolled in school, and receive all eligible services to facilitate student academic success. The responsibilities listed below are not all inclusive but shall be primary duties of the liaison. The homeless liaison shall ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the district;
- Homeless children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, and preschool programs administered by the school system, and referrals to health, mental health, dental and other appropriate services;
- Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services;
- Transportation cost disputes between the school system and school system of enrollment are resolved;
- Sensitivity and confidentiality training is provided to transportation and school personnel regarding the needs of homeless children and youth;
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney – Vento Act;
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated to locations where children and youth receive services under the Act;
- Required reports concerning the homeless education program are submitted to appropriate agencies and the State Department of Education; and
- Evaluation of the homeless education program is conducted annually and necessary program and implementation adjustments are made in a timely manner.

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM
APPENDIX C**

School Name _____

School Address _____

_____ School Telephone Number

_____ School Fax Number

Student's Name _____ SSN/SN _____ Grade _____

Current Address _____

E-911 Address (Street Address)

_____ City

_____ State

_____ Zip Code

Current Telephone Number _____

Complainant Information

Name _____ Relationship to the Student _____
Please Print

Current Address _____

_____ City

_____ State

_____ Zip Code

_____ Telephone Number

Note: Student information regarding address, telephone number, information protected by Everyday School Records Act can be released only to parent, guardian, the student, or a person specifically designated as a representative of the parent or guardian.

Name of school that complainant chooses student to be immediately enrolled in and/or transported to/from until dispute is resolved: _____

Is this the *school of origin*? _____

If no, from which school was the student transferred? _____

Reason for the complaint _____

_____ Complainant Signature

_____ Date

School Use Only

Principal's Action on the Complaint

Taken within _____ school day(s) after receiving notice of the complaint.

Date central office contact person was notified of the dispute: _____

Action taken by the principal to resolve the dispute:

Was the dispute resolved? _____

Fax this form to the central office contact person on the day of the complaint

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
DISTRICT ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM**

APPENDIX D

Student's Name _____ SSN/SN _____

School Name _____ Grade _____

District Action on Complaint

Taken within _____ school days after receiving notice of the complaint. Was the complaint resolved at the district level? _____ yes _____ no

If the dispute was resolved at the district level, describe the action taken by the county homeless liaison to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the complainant:

If the dispute was not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, did the county homeless liaison convene a meeting of the interested parties to attempt resolution of the dispute? _____ yes _____ no
If yes, when and where did the meeting take place? Describe the outcome of the meeting.

If no, will a meeting be held for resolution purposes? When? Where?

If a resolution cannot be derived at the district level, the county homeless liaison should assist the complainant in contacting service organizations to provide technical assistance to the complainant. Did the county homeless liaison assist the complainant in this manner? _____ yes _____ no

Name of service organization contacted for assistance _____

Was the dispute resolved? _____

Date _____

Describe the resolution.

Complainant Signature

Homeless Liaison

**HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM
EVALUATION**

APPENDIX E

School / System

Date

1. How many homeless children and youth were enrolled during this school year? _____

2. Were there any barriers to enrollment? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, please explain:

3. Were there any issues involving providing educational services for eligible students?

_____ yes _____ no

If yes, please explain:

4. Were there any disputes concerning school placement? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, were they resolved? _____ yes _____ no

5. Please make suggestions on how to improve the efficiency / effectiveness of program implementation and increase student achievement:

Evaluators:
