



Book	Policy Manual
Section	Section 200 - Pupils
Title	Homeless Students
Code	251
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## **251 – HOMELESS STUDENTS**

### **I. Purpose**

The Board recognizes the need to promptly identify homeless children and youths within the District, facilitate their immediate enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education, in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.

[24 P.S. 1306](#)  
[22 PA Code 11.18](#)

### **II. Authority**

A. The Board shall ensure that homeless children and youths have equal access to the same educational program and services provided to other District students. The Board shall make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children within the District, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education, in compliance with federal and state law and regulations.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11431 et seq.](#)

B. The Board may authorize the Superintendent to waive District policies, procedures, and Administrative Regulations that create barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability, and success in school of homeless children and youths.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)

C. It is the policy of the Board that no student shall be discriminated against, segregated, or stigmatized based on his/her homeless status.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11434a](#)

### **III. Definitions**

A. Enroll or Enrollment – includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11434a](#)

- B. Homeless Children and Youths – individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, which include the following conditions:

[34 CFR 200.30](#)

- i. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of house, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
  - ii. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
  - iii. Living in emergency, transitional, or domestic violence shelters.
  - iv. Abandoned in hospitals.
  - v. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
  - vi. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard house, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
  - vii. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.
  - viii. School-aged parents living in houses for school-aged parents if they have no other available living accommodations.
- C. Migratory Children - children who are or whose parent(s)/guardian(s) are migratory agricultural workers, including migratory fisherman, and those who have moved from one school district to another in the preceding thirty-six (36) months, in order to obtain or accompany such parent(s)/guardian(s) for temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work.
- D. School of Origin – the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including preschool if offered by the District. When the child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feed schools.

[42 U.S.C., Sec 11432](#)

- E. Unaccompanied Youth – a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth who have run away from home, been abandoned or forced out of the home by a parent, guardian, or other caretaker, or separated from a parent or guardian for any other reason.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11434a](#)

#### IV. Delegation of Responsibility

- A. The Board designates the Superintendent or his/her designee to serve as the District's Liaison for homeless children and youths.
- B. The District's Liaison shall ensure outreach and coordination with:

[42 U.S.C. 11432](#)

- i. Local service agencies and other entities that provide services to homeless children and youths and families.
- ii. Other school districts on issues of prompt identification, transfer of records, transportation, and other inter-district activities.
- iii. District staff responsible for the provisions of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

- iv. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.
- C. The District's Liaison shall ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parent(s)/guardian(s) of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths. Such notice shall be provided in a manner and form understandable to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of homeless child and youths, and unaccompanied youths.
- D. The District's Liaison shall provide reliable, valid, and comprehensive data to the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)

## V. Guidelines

### A. Enrollment/Placement

#### i. Best Interest Determination

- a. Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth.
- b. Consider student-centered factors related to impact of mobility on achievement, education, and health and safety, giving priority to the request of the parent(s)/guardian(s), or unaccompanied youth.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)

- c. If, after such consideration, the District determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth, the District shall provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be in a manner and form understandable to the parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth and shall include information regarding the right to appeal.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)

- d. If the District is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the District shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's placement.

#### ii. Placement

- a. In accordance with the child's or youth's best interest, the District shall continue to enroll the homeless student in his/her school of origin while s/he remains homeless and through the end of the academic year in which s/he obtains permanent housing.
- b. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the student is actually living or other schools.
- c. The District Liaison shall assist an unaccompanied youth in placement or enrollment decisions, giving priority to the views of the student in determining where s/he will be enrolled.
- d. The District shall provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of any District decision related to school selection or placement, including the right to appeal.
- e. Homeless students automatically qualify for free meal benefits under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

iii. Enrollment

- a. The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if:
  1. The student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.
  2. The application or enrollment deadline has passed during any period of homelessness.
  3. The District Liaison shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic or other records.
  4. The District will require a parent/guardian to submit contact information.

iv. Dispute Resolution

- a. The parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the District's Liaison, who shall assist in the dispute resolution process.
- b. The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.
- c. The District's Liaison shall issue a written decision of the dispute within twenty (20) business days of being notified of the dispute.
- d. A parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied youth may appeal the district's written decision or file a complaint with the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homeless Program.

v. Education Records

- a. Information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

vi. Comparable Services

- a. Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other District students including, but not limited to:
  1. Transportation services  
[24 P.S. 1306](#)  
[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)
  2. School nutrition programs
  3. Career and technical education
  4. Education programs for which the homeless student meets the eligibility criteria such as:
    - Services provided under Title I or similar state or local programs
    - Programs for English Language Learners
    - Programs for students with disabilities
    - Programs for gifted and talented students

b. Transportation

1. The District shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend within the school district.
2. If the school of origin is outside District boundaries or homeless students live in another district but will attend their school of origin in this District, the school districts shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.

[24 P.S. 1306](#)  
[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)

c. Training

1. The District Liaison shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance activities offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.
2. The District Liaison shall arrange professional development programs for school staff, including office staff.

[42 U.S.C., Sec. 11432](#)

3. School personnel services to homeless children and youth, including school enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support to:
  - Improve identification of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths.
  - Understand the rights of such children, including requirements for immediate enrollment and transportation.
  - Heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to the educational needs of such children.