

EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN

The Cambridge Public Schools is committed to ensuring that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth in the school district in accordance with the provisions of the McKinney Vento Homeless Education Act.

“Homeless Children and Youth” are defined, in accordance with the provisions of 20 U.S.C. §11434a(2)(A), as:

Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately operated, shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The definition includes:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are 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; and
- Unaccompanied youth – a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

To the extent feasible, homeless students will remain in their school of origin while the student remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which the student obtains permanent housing. Enrollment in the Cambridge Public Schools will be done in accordance with the provisions of the Cambridge Public Schools Controlled Choice Plan. Alternatively, homeless students may seek to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing. Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different school district, then the Cambridge Public Schools will seek to coordinate transportation services for the student with the other school district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the Cambridge Public Schools will enroll the homeless student or unaccompanied youth in school and provide transportation pending the resolution of the dispute. At the time of enrollment, the Cambridge Public Schools will provide the homeless student, his/her parent/guardian and/or unaccompanied youth with a written notification of the school district's decision on the student's enrollment including why the school district is challenging the enrollment, an explanation of the dispute resolution process, and a notice of the right to appeal the enrollment decision. The Homeless Education Liaison shall be responsible for monitoring and carrying out the dispute resolution process in accordance with the procedures established by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the Homeless Education Liaison for the school district. The Homeless Education Liaison will coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children, coordinate with other school districts on issues of transportation and transfer of records and provide notice of the educational rights of homeless students. The Homeless Education Liaison also will assist students and families in obtaining copies of their current immunization records or in obtaining immunizations as soon as possible although students that do not have immediate access to immunization records shall be admitted under a personal exception. Any guidelines established by the Superintendent of Schools to implement this policy shall address the areas that may present bars to the education of homeless children and unaccompanied youth, including the areas of enrollment (including immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation), and transportation.

LEGA: REF.: 20 U.S.C. §11431 *et seq.*

Adopted: December 6, 2005