

# CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

135 BERKSHIRE STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02141

20-186



July 21, 2020

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

## Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services

- Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the revisions to the current Education of Homeless Students Policy as detailed in the attached document.
- Description: This policy is required by the McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, Part A as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- This is a first reading of the proposed revisions to the current Education of Homeless Students Policy.
- Supporting Data: Redline of revisions to the current Education of Homeless Children Policy.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "KS" or similar initials.

Kenneth N. Salim, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

# EDUCATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES CHILDREN

The Cambridge Public Schools is committed to ensuring that homeless children and youth and unaccompanied 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. As required by law, the Cambridge Public Schools will work with homeless children and youth and unaccompanied youth (collectively "homeless students") as well as their families or legal guardians to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, school nutrition programs, summer programming and extracurricular activities.

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

Individuals who lacking 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 being abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- ☐ Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a living in public or private places 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
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- migratory children living in conditions described above in the previous examples
- ☐ Unaccompanied youth — a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Students Remaining in Schools of Origin



It is presumed to be in the best interests of homeless students to To the extent feasible, homeless students will remain in their school of origin, i.e., the school that the student was attending at the time they became homeless, or the last school the student attended prior to becoming homeless. Homeless students may continue to attend their school of origin for as long as they -while the student remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which the student obtains permanent housing. For homeless students who complete the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term "school of origin" shall also include the receiving school in the same school district educating students at the next grade level. 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 comparable to that provided for all other students attending school in the Cambridge Public Schools. The Cambridge Public Schools will transport students who are sheltered or temporarily residing within the district to the student's school of origin. For homeless students attending a school of origin located outside the district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing, the district in which the school of origin is located will coordinate with the district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing to provide the transportation services necessary for the student, and these districts will divide the cost equally. Homeless student who find permanent housing mid-school year will continue to receive transportation services until the end of the school year. 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.

#### Students Enrolling in District Where Sheltered or Temporarily Residing

Parents/Guardians/Caregivers may elect to enroll students in the school district in which the student is sheltered or temporarily residing, rather than having the student remain in the school of origin. Enrollment changes for homeless students should take place immediately.

If homeless students re unable to provide written proof of their shelter or temporary residence in the district, the homeless liaison will work with the family seeking enrollment to determine homelessness. Information regarding a homeless student's living arrangement shall be considered a student education record, and not directory information. Records containing information about the homeless student's living arrangement may not be disclosed without the consent of the parent/guardian/caregiver or satisfaction of another student-privacy related exemption.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be permitted to enroll under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district Homeless Education Liaison is directed to assist. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with Cambridge Public School's policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. After enrollment, the Cambridge Public Schools will immediately request available records from the student's previous school.

Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies or intra or inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families who reside in the



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district. Accordingly, the Cambridge Public Schools will provide transportation services to school in a manner comparable to the transportation provided for all other students in the district.

#### Dispute Resolution

-If the district disagrees with a parent/guardian/caregiver's decision to keep a student enrolled in the school of origin and considers enrollment in the district where the student is sheltered or temporarily residing to be in the student's best interest, the district will explain to the parent/guardian/caregiver, in writing and in a language the parent/guardian/caregiver can understand, the rationale for its determination and provide the parent/guardian/caregiver with written notice of their rights to appeal the district's determination to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. During the pendency of any such appeal, the student should remain enrolled in the school selected by the parent/guardian/caregiver, receiving transportation to school and access to other available services and programs.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Advisory on Homeless Education Assistance contains additional information about educating homeless students and the appeal process.

~~-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.~~

#### Homeless Liaison

The Superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to ~~beserve as~~ the Cambridge Public Schools' Homeless Education Liaison for students and their families~~the school district~~. The Homeless Education Liaison will coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youth and their families;~~coordinate with~~ other school districts on issues of transportation and transfer of records; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination including providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in locations such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The Homeless Education Liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. The Homeless Education Liaison shall ensure that Cambridge Public Schools' staff receive professional development and other support on issues involving 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.~~

LEGAL REF.: The McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, Part A, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015

~~20 U.S.C. §11431 et seq.~~

Adopted: ~~December 6, 2005~~