

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN

The County Board of Education desires to ensure that homeless students have access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students within the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (COE). The COE shall provide homeless students with access to education and other services necessary for these students to meet the same challenging academic standards and other students.

Homeless students shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way.

The County Superintendent of Schools or designee shall ensure that placement decisions for homeless students are based on the student's best interest as defined in law and administrative regulation.

To the extent practical and as required by law, the County Office of Education will work with homeless students and their families 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 with county and 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 and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- B. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- C. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. Are abandoned in hospitals;
- E. Awaiting foster care placement;
- F. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- G. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings;

H. Are migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the County's liaison for homeless students and their families.

To the extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in which attendance area the student is actually living, or other schools. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

The County's liaison for homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, and family shelters. The County liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

1980-1986 County community schools

2558.2 Use of revenue limits to determine average daily attendance of homeless children

3907.5 Payment of transportation costs by parents

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 42

11431-11435 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 1

Part C, No Child Left Behind Act, 2002

REVISED CODE OF WASHINGTON

28A.225.215 Enrollment of children without legal residences

Adopted: 11/20/2014