



Anderson Public Schools

– Homeless Education Plan –

Homeless Education

Anderson Public School District is committed to providing all students with sound educational experiences. We recognize the challenges that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. These provisions promote greater stability for homeless children and youth and ensure that each has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youth. In addition, homeless students will not be separated from the mainstream school environment. Our School is committed to removing barriers of homeless students' access to academic and extracurricular activities, as well as removing the stigma of homelessness.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youths

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youths as individuals who lack a fixed, or regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

1. Children and youth who:
 - share the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - live in emergency or transitional shelters; or
 - are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is not ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Children and youth who live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or
4. Migratory children who are living in circumstances set forth in Items 1, 2 and 3 above.

The McKinney Vento Act no longer includes children and youths who are awaiting foster care placement in the definition of “homeless children and youths.” The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), includes new provisions for ensuring the educational stability of children in foster care under Title 1, Part A (see the District’s “School Foster Care Plan”).

Identification of Homeless Children and Youths

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison or designee will identify children and youths experiencing homelessness in the district, both in and out of school, and maintain access to data regarding students in this situation.

The local liaison or designee will ensure that school personnel receive training on the possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth experiencing homelessness, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The local liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to offer assistance in identifying potential homeless students, and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison.

The local liaison will keep data on the number of children and youths experiencing homelessness in the district where they are living, their academic achievement (including performance on state and district-wide assessments), and the reason for any enrollment delays, interruption in their education, or school transfers.

The following strategies and activities are used to ensure that all students experiencing homelessness are identified:

- Housing Questionnaire
- Referrals
- Ongoing Outreach and Training for School Staff
- Interagency Collaboration

Rights of Eligible Children and Youth

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, eligible children and youth have the right to:

1. Enroll in school immediately, even if they are lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
2. Choose between the local school where they are living or the school last attended before becoming homeless, when feasible.

3. Receive transportation assistance to the school of origin when requested by a parent/guardian/homeless unaccompanied youth.
4. Attend school and participate in school programs with children who are not homeless. Students cannot be separated from the regular school program because they are homeless.
5. Receive school services comparable to services offered to other students.

Enrollment Process

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students experiencing homelessness may not have school enrollment documents readily available. Nonetheless, the district shall immediately enroll any child or youth in this situation. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment.

If complete records are not available, IEP teams or other committees or school officials, as appropriate, must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements, and the provision of services.

The enrollment of homeless children and youth shall **NOT** be denied or delayed due to any barriers including the lack of the following enrollment requirements:

- Legal guardianship/custody requirements
- Parent/Guardian's photo ID
- Birth certificate
- School records and/or transcripts
- Immunization or health records
- Proofs of residence
- Transportation
- Second Party Residence Documentation Form.

Homeless Education Liaison

The School will assign at least one person to serve as a Homeless Education Liaison, or Point of Contact (POC). The District shall submit this person's name to the OSDE, through the online Grants Management System. If additional staff members are needed to meet the requirements, the District will make assignments as deemed necessary. The Homeless Education Liaison will work in the best interest of the child to ensure that all educational requirements are being satisfied. The liaison will meet with the site administration, school counselor, classroom

teacher, parent, and other agency personnel as necessary. The liaison will have access to available trainings and to other resources necessary to stay informed of any changes in the Homeless Education Regulations.

In 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A), the McKinney-Vento Act lists the responsibilities of the local liaison. The law states that the local liaisons will ensure that

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies;
- Homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, school;
- Homeless families, children, and youths have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start programs, early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA;
- Homeless families, children, and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
- The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and forum understandable to parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth;
- Enrollment disputes are mediated according to 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E); • The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied homeless youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school or origin;
- School personnel who serve homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support; • Unaccompanied homeless youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards established for other students, and are informed of their status as independent students and assisted to receive verification of their status for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

