

HOMELESS STUDENTS

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility, in accordance with Federal and State laws, to identify homeless children within the district, encourage their enrollment and eliminate existing barriers to their education that may exist in District practices. The Board will provide homeless children attending the District's schools with access to the same free and appropriate public education and other school programs and activities, including preschool education, as other children.

The District shall coordinate with local social services agencies and other entities providing services to homeless children and their families for the provision of services to homeless children, and shall coordinate with other school districts on issues of prompt identification, transportation, transfer of records, and other inter-district activities. This shall include ensuring the provision of appropriate services to homeless students with disabilities who are eligible for services under either Section 504 or IDEA.

A homeless child has the right to attend school in either the district of origin (i.e., where he/she resided before becoming homeless), the district of current location, or a district participating in a regional placement plan. The homeless child is entitled to attend the designated school district on a tuition-free basis for the duration of his or her homelessness. If the child becomes permanently housed, the child is entitled to continued attendance in the same school building until the end of the school year, and for one additional year if that year constitutes the child's terminal year in such building. If a homeless child completes the final grade level in his/her school of origin, the child may also attend the designated receiving school at the next grade level for that one year.

Definition of Homeless Child and Unaccompanied Youth

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (42 USC § 11434a [2]) (McKinney-Vento) and New York State Education Law § 3209 (1) (a), a homeless child is defined as a child who does not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or whose primary nighttime location is in a public or private shelter designated to provide temporary living accommodations, or a place not designed for, or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings. This definition includes a child who is:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason (sometimes referred to as double-up).
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings.
- Abandoned in hospitals.
- Awaiting foster care placement.
- A migratory child who qualifies as homeless because he or she is living in circumstances described above.

In addition, an unaccompanied youth is a homeless child for whom no parent or person is parental relation is available (8 NYCRR § 100.2[x] [1] [vi]).

Identification of Homeless Students

The Great Neck Public Schools shall determine whether there are homeless students within the Great Neck School District. It shall do so by all means available, including, but not limited to contacting:

- Nassau County Department of Social Services.
- Any local runaway and homeless youth shelter (as listed at <http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/Youth/rhydirectory.asp>).
- Any other shelters located in the district.

The District will have a student residency questionnaire that asks for a description of the current living arrangements of the child or youth in order to determine whether the child or youth meets the definition of a homeless child under McKinney-Vento and New York State Education Law §3209 (1) (a). This questionnaire will be distributed to every family upon registration for school, and will also be available in all school buildings for distribution by the school guidance and nursing staff. For immediate enrollment, parents/guardians of homeless students are not required to provide proof of residency or any other documentation ordinarily required. Information about a homeless child's living situation shall be treated as a student education record, and shall not be deemed to be directory information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) in accordance with *Policy 5500 Student Records*.

Duties of the Mandated Local Liaison for Homeless Children and Youth

Every Local Education Agency (LEA), regardless of whether it receives a McKinney-Vento sub-grant, is required to designate a local liaison for homeless children and youth (Homeless Liaison). The Homeless Liaison at the LEA serves as one of the primary contacts between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers, and other service providers. The Homeless Liaison coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school, and have the opportunity to succeed academically. The liaison shall receive appropriate professional development on identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students, including the definitions of terms related to homelessness.

The LEA understands that its Homeless Liaison must ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the LEA.

- Homeless children and youth and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start and preschool programs administered by the LEA, and referrals to health, mental health, dental and other appropriate services.
- Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school district of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services.
- Disputes regarding school selection, enrollment or transportation are mediated in accordance with the requirements of McKinney-Vento.
- Assistance in commencing an appeal pursuant to Education Law §310 of a final determination regarding enrollment, school selection and/or transportation is provided to the homeless child's or youth's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth in accordance with the provisions of 8 NYCRR §100.2(x)(7)(iii).
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is posted in locations where such students receive services, such as schools, shelters, and soup kitchens.
- A record is maintained of all appeals of enrollment, school selection and transportation.
- School personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families are informed of the duties of the Homeless Liaison. *42 USC §11432(g)(6)(A); 8 NYCRR §100.2(x)(7)(iii)*

Transportation Responsibilities

- A Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) is responsible for providing transportation to homeless children who are eligible for benefits under Social Services Law §350-j and placed in temporary housing arrangements outside their designated districts.
- To the extent funds are provided for such purpose, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) must provide transportation for each homeless child who lives in a residential program for runaway youth and homeless youth located outside of the designated school district. The LDSS or OCFS may contract with a school district or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide such transportation. The costs for transportation will be reimbursed by the LDSS with the submission of a Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Transportation Program Form, which is available from the Homeless Education Program Office (518-473-0295).
- Any homeless child not entitled to receive transportation from the LDSS or OCFS must be transported by the designated school district. *NY Education Law §3209(4); 8 NYCRR §100.2(x)(6)*

- When the school district of the current location is designated as the school district the homeless child will attend, that school district must provide transportation to the homeless child on the same basis as it is provided to resident students. *NY Education Law §3209(4)(d); 8 NYCRR §100.2(x)(6)(iii)*
- If the homeless child designates the school district of origin or a school district participating in a regional placement plan, then that school district must provide transportation to and from the homeless child's temporary housing and school. Such transportation cannot exceed 50 miles one way, unless the Commissioner determines that it is in the best interest of the child. *NY Education Law §3209(4)(c); 8 NYCRR §100.2(x)(6)(ii)*
- Homeless children are entitled to transportation during any disputes regarding school selection and enrollment. *8 NYCRR §100.2(x)(7)(ii)(c)*

Great Neck Public Schools

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