

Stanton Township Public Schools

Homeless Education Plan

11/25/2014

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Children who meet the Federal definition of “homeless” will be provided a free appropriate public education in the same manner as all other students of the District. To that end, homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless and will be assigned to the school serving those non-homeless students residing the area in which the homeless child is actually living. The District shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

A. Homeless Liaison

1. Responsibilities/Duties:

The Superintendent will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as assigned by the Superintendent. Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth as well as with community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.

As part of his/her assigned duties, the Liaison for Homeless Children will inform school personnel, services providers and advocates working with homeless families about his/her duties.

The Liaison will coordinate District operations and services so that:

- a. Homeless children are identified with special attention given to the enrollment and attendance of homeless children who are not current attending school;
- b. Homeless children have full and fair opportunity to succeed in school;
- c. Homeless families and children receive educational services for which they are eligible, including any District preschool programs; and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;
- d. Parents or guardians of homeless children 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;
- e. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated where such children receive services, such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens;
- f. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with Board Policy and State Consolidated Plan;
- g. The parents or guardians of any homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless minor are fully informed of transportation services and assisted in accessing such transportation.

2. Current Liaison:

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B. Definitions

Homeless children and youth means children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who:

- Share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason
- Live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Live in emergency or transitional shelters
- Are abandoned in hospitals
- Are awaiting foster care placement
- Have a primary night time residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Live in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting

Additionally, pursuant to Federal and State Law, migratory children who are living in circumstances described in the bullet points above are also considered homeless.

Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs administered by the School District.

C. Assurances

The District shall remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students in schools in the District. Homeless students shall be enrolled immediately, even if they do not have the necessary enrollment documentation such as immunization and health records, proof of residency or guardianship, birth certificate, school records, and other documentation.

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in the District including:

1. Transportation services;
2. Educational services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act or similar State or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;
3. School nutrition programs; and
4. Before- and After-school programs.

Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin or the local attendance area school, according to the child's best interest. The school of origin is the school that the student attended when permanently housed or last enrolled. The local attendance area school is any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

Homeless students have the right to dispute their school assignment, if their assignment is other than their school of origin. In determining the best interest of the student, the District shall, to the extent feasible, keep the student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the homeless student's parent or guardian of the unaccompanied youth. If the student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, will be provided to the homeless student's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth.

The Board of Education requires that these rights and the dispute process be communicated to the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth.

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth of the rights described above, the District shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness in each school.

D. Identification

Homeless children and youth will be identified through:

1. The application process for enrollment (self-identification)
2. School personnel recommendations
3. Coordinated activities with other entities and agencies

Stanton Township Public Schools will comply with all federal, state, county, and other data collections and reporting requirements regarding homeless children and youth.

E. Enrollment

The Liaison must be notified immediately upon the enrollment or assignment of a homeless child.

Homeless youth will not be discriminated against in the application process.

Homeless students shall be enrolled immediately, even if they do not have the necessary enrollment documentation such as immunization and health records, proof of residency or guardianship, birth certificate, school records, and other documentation.

Upon enrollment of a homeless child, the Liaison will coordinate with appropriate administrative staff to assure that the school last attended by a homeless child is immediately contacted to provide relevant academic or other relevant records. If upon enrollment the homeless child is found to be in need of any immunization required for enrollment by State law or any other medical records, the Liaison will assist the family or student in obtaining the immunizations or necessary medical records. The Liaison will also contact the Director of Transportation to assure transportation of the homeless student is provided in accordance with the Board's Transportation Policy.

In the case of unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall assist in the enrollment process. Unaccompanied youth shall be immediately enrolled even if unable to provide the school with records normally required for enrollment (as above), and despite the lack of parent or legal guardian's supervision or permissions, or "power of attorney" by supervising adult.

F. Records

Any confidential record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunizations or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special service programs, of each homeless child or youth will be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school or school district.

G. Enrollment /Assignment Disputes:

If a disagreement arises over school selection or enrollment, the student must be immediately enrolled in the school in which he/she is requesting enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute. Enrollment is defined as "attending classes and participating fully in school activities."

Any disputes regarding the enrollment or assignment of a homeless student will be referred to the Liaison for expeditious resolution. The Liaison should attempt to resolve disputes within five (5) school days. Any disputes which cannot be resolved by the Liaison should be reported to the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth at the Michigan Department of Education. According to State guidelines, the State Coordinator has an additional five (5) school days from the time of notification to bring about resolution. Individuals not satisfied with the State Coordinator's proposed resolution can appeal such decision to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction within five (5) school days for final resolution of the dispute.

H. Coordination/Collaboration of Services:

As part of his/her assigned duties, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for Homeless Children and other community and school personnel responsible for providing education and related services to homeless children including but not limited to:

1. School District services with local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children and their families, and
2. With other school districts on inter-district issues, such as transportation or the transfer of school records

Such coordination should be designed to: (1) facilitate homeless children having access and reasonable proximity to available education and related support services; and (2) raise the awareness of school personnel and service providers of the effects of short-term stays in a shelter or other challenges associated with homelessness.

I. Transportation

At the request of the parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local homeless liaison, transportation shall be provided for a homeless student to and from the school of origin as follows:

1. If the homeless student continues to live in the School District in which the school of origin is located, transportation will be provided in accordance with the District policy/administrative guidelines.
2. If the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his/her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

F. Nutrition Programs

Homeless students automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch. Families do not have to fill out an application or provide proof of income. Homeless students will be added to the free meals program as soon as they have been identified. The Homeless Liaison will provide a written letter to the school nutrition program to identify any homeless student.