

# USD 500 School Board, Administrative Procedures & Guidelines:

## Education of Homeless Children and Youth

The School Board of USD 500 possesses a strong commitment to ensuring that homeless children and youth receive a meaningful opportunity to enroll and attend all public schools in the district. These procedures and guidelines are promulgated with the intention of minimizing educational disruption for homeless children and youth, and also eliminating practices that lead to stigmatization and isolation. The Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools Office of the Homeless Liaison acts as a resource center for all school personnel facing questions related to homeless children and youth.

The School Board's policy rests upon a foundation provided by federal law, the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (as reauthorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act), 42 U.S.C. § 11435 *et. seq.* Federal law requires that all schools provide homeless students with immediate access to education, even if the child lacks school records, a birth certificate, medical/immunization documents, or proof of residency. In this context, "homeless children and youth" includes individuals living in a shelter, transitional housing, "doubled-up" with friends or relatives on a temporary basis, on the street, as a runaway, or in a vehicle, park, motel, abandoned building, public setting or campground.

### **IDENTIFICATION**

In order to facilitate the identification of homeless students, the USD 500 School Board has determined each student who attempts to enroll in Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools will fill out a student residency questionnaire. This form will help identify students for referral to the Office of the Homeless Liaison. It appears as Attachment A, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

### **ENROLLMENT**

Homeless children have the right to *immediate* enrollment in school. Thus, school officials must permit children to enroll and begin attending school immediately, even if the child lacks documentation. A homeless child need not provide a birth certificate, shot records, proof of residence, or a social security card to begin attending school. All USD 500 schools (including alternative schools) must abide by this federal mandate. It is also mandated that USD 500 will not seek notarized affidavits, or proof of residence in any form for homeless families that are "doubled-up" (i.e., children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason). Such requirements would create barriers to enrollment, and violate the

McKinney-Vento Act. To reiterate, enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- i) proof of residency;
- ii) transcripts/school records;
- iii) immunizations, or immunization, health, medical, physical records;
- iv) proof of guardianship;
- v) birth certificate;
- vi) any other document requirements;
- vii) unpaid school fees;
- viii) lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes; and
- ix) any factor related to the student's living situation.

In addition, homeless children have the right to stay in their "school of origin" for the entire time that they are homeless. They also may remain in their school of origin until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. A "school of origin" consists of the school the child attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child was last enrolled. USD 500 schools must keep homeless students in their school of origin, unless the parent or guardian desires otherwise. A homeless child also has the choice of enrolling in the school whose attendance area is associated with his or her temporary residence.

#### **ADMISSION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN: SPECIFIC PROCEDURES**

The USD 500 School Board is committed to educating homeless children and youth. Homeless children and youth shall not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. In addition, homeless children have the right to *immediate* enrollment in school. Thus, school officials must permit homeless students to enroll and begin attending school immediately.

The USD 500 School District will serve each homeless student according to the student's best interest and will

- (i) continue the student's education in the "school of origin" for the duration of the school year,
  - in situations where the student becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and
  - in situations where a homeless student obtains permanent housing during the school year

or

- (ii) enroll the student in any public school associated with the attendance area for the place where the student is actually living.

In determining the best interest of a homeless student, the USD 500 School Board shall

- (i) keep the student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's parent or guardian;
- (ii) follow the procedures identified by the Kansas State Department of Education in addressing disputes related to enrollment. See Attachment B, which is hereby incorporated by reference.
- (iii) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the district's homeless liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions regarding the student, considers the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the dispute resolution process outlined in Attachment B.

Any school official who receives a Student Residency Affidavit from the Office of the Homeless Liaison will immediately enroll the presenting student in school. This appears as Attachment C, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

## **UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH**

Unaccompanied youth must be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling or liaison.

The term "unaccompanied youth" includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Such young people may include those who: were asked to leave home by a parent; left home with the consent of a parent; have no formal custody papers or arrangements while their parents are in jail, the hospital, or a rehabilitation center; or ran away from home. Youth on their own cannot be kept out of school. USD 500 employs a "Caregiver's Authorization Form" (See Attachment D, which is hereby adopted and incorporated by reference), to permit the enrollment of a minor in school and school-related medical care. Finally, for unaccompanied youth who lack any caregiver, USD 500 recognizes the ability of the Office of the Homeless Liaison to call in sick days for the associated youth and provide appropriate certifications for college financial aid applications (such as FAFSA).

## **FULL ACCESS**

The U.S. Congress has stated that homelessness alone is not a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. Thus, USD 500 schools may not segregate homeless students in separate schools, separate programs or separate settings within schools, except as necessary to provide temporary, special and supplemental services. Homeless children have the right to equal access to public preschool, Head Start, Even Start, and before and after-school care programs. USD 500 schools will actively recruit homeless children for these programs, and will follow the

same enrollment procedures outlined in the USD 500 Board policy on the admission of homeless children and youth to preschool programs.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

USD 500 schools will provide transportation for homeless students to attend their school of origin, or the school associated with their current place of residence.

## **SCHOOL LUNCHESES**

Homeless students are entitled to *immediate* participation in the free school lunch program. The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has established a simplified enrollment process for homeless children. The USDA Director of the Child Nutrition Program issued an official policy on April 6, 1992, indicating that "we want to ensure that free meals are available for all eligible children, including the homeless, in an expeditious manner and that the certification process is not overly burdensome or an impediment to participation. To assist those responsible for eligibility determinations in meeting the nutritional needs of homeless children, we are establishing a nationwide policy to simplify access to the child nutrition programs for homeless children whose parents/guardians fail to return a free and reduced price application or who are not certified under direct certification procedures." (Stanley Garnett, FNS: CND: 123, April 6, 1992).

The USDA memo provides that, "We are establishing the following procedures for all of the child nutrition programs. When an application is not submitted by the household or it is not anticipated that an application will be submitted, it is acceptable for the director of the homeless shelter at which the child resides to complete and submit an application for the child; or *local level officials may complete an application for a child and approve the child for free meals solely on their knowledge that the child's address is in a homeless shelter or that the child has no known address and is indeed homeless.*"

"Moreover, when it is not practical for those officials to complete individual applications because of large numbers of homeless children...documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility may consist of a list containing the following information: the child's name, effective date, date of withdrawal, residence (shelter, etc), signature of determining official," the USDA memo concludes. Note, this policy guidance became law when §107 of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 amended § 9(b) of the National School Lunch Act. The new provision made runaway, homeless, and migrant children categorically eligible for free meal benefits.

The USD 500 School Board plans to act in full compliance with this federal law, and requires that all of its school lunch administrators and personnel provide free lunches for homeless children and youth from their first day of enrollment. It is standard practice for the USD 500 Homeless Liaison, and associated staff, to provide a faxed list of homeless students to nutritional services. These students are then entitled to immediate and ongoing enrollment in the free lunch program. No further forms need to be filled out.

Homeless students are entitled to free lunch from the first day they are enrolled in school, and are entitled to free lunch for the remainder of the school year.

## **UNIFORM OR DRESS CODE REQUIREMENTS**

USD 500 schools are obligated by federal law to review and revise policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth. The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that schools develop strategies to address enrollment delays caused by uniform or dress code requirements. No homeless child shall face enrollment delays, or be asked to wait to attend classes, based on the absence of a uniform. The USD 500 Office of the Homeless Liaison has funding available to provide uniforms to homeless children and youth. Please contact the office for assistance. While uniforms are being obtained, the homeless child or youth is still entitled to attend school.

## **STUDENT/TEACHER INTERACTIONS**

Teachers need to understand the particular educational challenges facing homeless children and youth. When a child appears in class without supplies, or lacks adequate clothing or grooming, this represents an opportunity for the teacher to reach out to the child and ascertain whether the child has any special needs in terms of housing or resource referral. All such conversations should occur in a confidential manner. A teacher must not penalize a child for lacking adequate supplies or clothing.

## **STUDENT/STAFF INTERACTIONS**

Staff members, such as clerical and secretarial personnel, must pay particular attention to the educational challenges facing homeless children and youth. Since a homeless child often first encounters a staff person when attempting to enroll in school, staff personnel play a crucial role in ensuring that the homeless child overcomes all obstacles to enrollment. USD 500 considers it mandatory that all staff receive adequate training in recognizing the issues related to homelessness and treating students appropriately.

Thus, all enrollment staff should understand that homeless children need not provide documentation to enroll in school. In addition, where a child appears without supplies, or lacks adequate clothing or grooming, this represents an opportunity for the staff member to reach out to the child and ascertain whether the child has any special needs in terms of housing or resource referral. All such conversations should occur in a confidential manner.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Homeless students are generally subject to the same disciplinary standards as other students; however, disciplinary sanctions must not be imposed for code of conduct violations related to tardiness, absences, or apparel concerns, to the extent these violations result from the student's homeless situation. All discipline involving homeless students should recognize the challenges associated with their living situation, and strive

to keep the student stabilized in the school environment. USD 500 Schools must notify the homeless liaison whenever disciplinary sanctions will result in the suspension or expulsion of a homeless student, and provide an opportunity for the homeless liaison to participate in associated disciplinary hearings.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Under federal law, if a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the homeless child or youth must be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. A school's ultimate enrollment decision must be provided to the parent or guardian of the child or youth in writing, with an explanation of the means for appealing the decision. The child or youth shall also receive a referral to the homeless liaison for further assistance.

The full procedures for dispute resolution, as mandated by the Kansas State Department of Education (and articulated in Attachment B), and hereby adopted and incorporated by reference.

**ATTACHMENT A**

USD 500 Student Residency Questionnaire

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (month/day/year) Age: \_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_ Female Ethnic Background: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID No. (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire is intended to address the McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. 11435. The answers to this residency information help determine the services the student may be eligible to receive.

1. Is your current address a temporary living arrangement? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No
2. If YES, have you recently lost your housing or experienced an economic hardship? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If you answered YES to the questions above, please complete the rest of this form. If you answered NO, please stop here.

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Where is the student presently living? (Check one box).

- In a motel
- In a shelter
- With more than one family in a house or apartment
- Moving from place to place
- In a car, park, campsite, or other place not designed for ordinary housing

Name of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardians(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a copy to: Office of the Homeless Liaison, USD 500, 645 Nebraska, Kansas City, Kansas 66101. Fax: (913) 281-0993 Phone: (913) 621-4690

## ATTACHMENT B

# DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

A dispute resolution procedure has been created to reflect the duties and required responsibilities of USD 500. Copies of this procedure should be available upon request to local service providers, parents of students experiencing homelessness and unaccompanied youth. This procedure will be used for all dispute resolution issues regarding homeless children and youth including educational placement.

**It is mandatory that the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of any associated dispute.**

### **1. USD 500 Homeless Liaison Communication**

The parent, guardian, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth will contact the USD 500 homeless liaison. At that point, the liaison will assist the person with prompt resolution of the dispute (within ten business days) or assist the client with pursuit of steps two and three.

### **2. Filing of the Dispute Resolution Form**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Dispute Resolution Form permits notification of parents, guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth of school placement decisions and explains the right to appeal such decisions. If the liaison cannot resolve the enrollment dispute within ten business days, the Dispute Resolution Form will be executed and sent to the Kansas State Department of Education.

### **3. SEA Coordinator Communication**

The liaison will initially attempt to resolve the dispute within USD 500. If the dispute is not resolved in this fashion, the liaison will contact the Kansas State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Kansas State Department of Education. The State Coordinator will attempt to resolve the conflict through communication with USD 500, the USD 500 homeless liaison, and the affected parties.

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance  
Dispute Resolution Form**

**School District** \_\_\_\_\_ **Liaison** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first contact by student, parent, guardian, or caregiver \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the issue(s) in question

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Other school district contact with phone numbers (Principal, Superintendent or other involved individuals).

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ (send to KSDE within 10 business days)

District Resolution Results

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District Homeless Liaison Signature \_\_\_\_\_

This form must be filed with:

Tate Toedman

State Coordinator of the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

State and Federal Programs

120 S.E. 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Topeka, KS 66612-1182





# Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

## Office of the Homeless Liaison

645 Nebraska Ave., Kansas City, KS 66101

(913) 621-4690

fax: (913) 281-0993

[www.kckps.org](http://www.kckps.org)

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## Caregiver's Authorization Form

This form is intended to address the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) requirement that homeless children are to have access to education and other services. The McKinney-Vento Act specifically states that barriers to enrollment must be removed. In some cases, a child or youth who is homeless may not be able to reside with his/her parent or guardian.

### Instructions:

To authorize enrollment of a minor in school, complete items 1-4, and sign the form.

To authorize enrollment and school-related medical care, complete all items and sign the form.

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The minor named below lives in my home, and I am 18 years of age or older.

1. Name of minor: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Minor's birth date: \_\_\_\_\_
3. My name (adult giving authorization): \_\_\_\_\_
4. My home address: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Check one or both, as appropriate:

\_\_\_\_ I have advised the parent(s) or other person(s) having legal custody of the minor as to my intent to authorize medical care and have received no objection.

\_\_\_\_ I am unable to contact the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) at this time to notify them of my intended authorization.

6. My date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
7. My state driver's license or identification card number: \_\_\_\_\_

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of this state that the foregoing information is true and correct.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

