Students

Homeless Students

Children and youth who meet the Federal definition of “homeless” will be provided a free and appropriate public education in the same manner as all other students and will not be discriminated against, stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. No homeless child or youth will be denied enrollment based on lack of proof of residency. No CREC policy, administrative guideline, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in CREC Schools in compliance with federal and state law.

The Executive Director will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Students who will perform the duties as assigned by the Executive Director. Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Office of the 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.

(cf. 5143 – Student Health Assessments and Immunizations)
(cf. 5146 – Child Abuse and Neglect)

Legal Reference:
Connecticut General Statutes
10-253(e) School privileges for children in certain placements, non-resident children and children in temporary shelters.
17a-101 Protection of children from abuse. Reports required of certain professional persons. When child may be removed from surrounding without court order.
17a-102 Report of danger of abuse.
17a-103 Reports by others.
17a-106 Cooperation in relation to prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
46b-120 Definitions.

Policy adopted: March 18, 2009
Policy revised: June 21, 2017
Students

Homeless Students

This regulation is established in order to appropriately implement the policy pertaining to homeless children and youth, in compliance with all applicable federal and state statutes.

Definitions:

Homeless children and youth are federally defined as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence”, including children and youth who are:

a. sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;

b. living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;

c. living in emergency or transitional shelters;

d. abandoned in hospitals;

e. have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

f. living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings;

g. migratory children living in the above described circumstances.

Connecticut’s residency definitions contained in C.G.S. 10-253(d) defines non-residency as children residing with relatives or non-relatives, when it is the intention of such relatives or non-relatives and of the children or their parents or guardians that such residence is to be (1) permanent, (2) provided without pay and (3) not for the sole purpose of obtaining school accommodations. In addition, C.G.S. 10-253(e) indicates that children in temporary shelters are entitled to free school privileges from either the school district in which the shelter is located or from the school district in which the child would otherwise reside, if not for the need for temporary shelter. The district has an obligation to identify homeless and migratory children.

“Unaccompanied youth” is a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

“School of origin” is the school the homeless child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school of last enrollment, including a preschool. When the child or youth completes the final grade served by the school last attended or enrolled in, school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for all feeder schools.
“Enroll” and “enrollment” includes attending classes and fully participating in school activities.

District Obligations Regarding Placement of Homeless Students:

a. CREC policy must remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth, including such barriers as outstanding fees, fines or absences.

b. CREC must continue the homeless child’s or youth’s education in the school of origin if the family so desires; or must assist in enrolling the child or youth in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the area where the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

c. CREC must presume that keeping a homeless child or youth in the school of origin is in his/her best interest unless doing so is contrary to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.

d. CREC is required to work cooperatively with the LEA, “to the extent feasible” to keep the homeless child or youth in the school of origin unless it is against the wishes of the parent/guardian or youth. If CREC determines that it is not in the child’s or youth’s best interest to attend the school of origin, it will provide a written explanation of its determining reasons, in a manner and form that is understandable.

e. The homeless child’s or youth’s right to attend the school or origin extends for the duration of homelessness.

f. If a homeless child or youth becomes permanently housed during the academic year, he/she is entitled to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year.

g. A child or youth who becomes homeless in between academic years is entitled to attend his/her school of origin for the following academic year.

h. Information about a homeless student’s living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to FERPA protections and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Appeal Procedures:

a. C.G.S. 10-186 currently defines the process for resolving issues involving homeless students. The state is required to establish an appeal process.

b. In a dispute over eligibility the homeless child or youth shall immediately be enrolled in the school in which (she) has accepted a seat, pending final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.

c. CREC’s homeless liaison shall carry out the dispute resolution process expeditiously and, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the final resolution of the dispute and all available appeals.
Educational Services to be Provided to Homeless Students:

1. Educational services provided to homeless students are to be comparable to those received by other students in the school.

2. Homeless students may be entitled to such services as Title I, state/local remedial programs, special education, limited English proficiency, vocational education, gifted/talented and school nutrition programs, and preschool programs administered by the district.

3. Homelessness alone is not to be considered a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.

4. Homeless students may be segregated for short periods of time only for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special or supplemental services.

Transportation Obligations for Homeless Students:

1. CREC will collaboratively work with LEAs to provide transportation services. Services must be comparable to those provided other students.

2. Homeless students must be provided transportation to the school of origin, if requested by the parent/guardian, if the school is within the school district.

3. If the school of origin is in a different school district from where the homeless student is currently living, both school districts are to agree on a method for sharing the responsibility and costs, or share the costs and responsibility equally.

4. When a homeless student obtains permanent housing, transportation to the school of origin must be provided until the end of the academic year, if it is in the student’s best interest to remain in that school.

CREC Liaison for Homeless Students

The local liaison serves as one of the primary contacts between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers, and other service providers.

The local liaison must:

a. Ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies and entities.

b. Ensure that homeless children and youth have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the CREC school they attend.

c. In collaboration with the LEA ensure that homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs.
d. In collaboration with the LEA ensure that homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health, dental, mental health and substance abuse services; housing services; and other appropriate services.

e. Ensure that parents/guardians of homeless children 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.

f. Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by them and by their parents/guardians, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to them and their parents/guardians.

g. In collaboration with the LEA ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act.

h. In collaboration with the LEA ensure that homeless children and youths and their parents/guardians are fully informed of all transportation services, including to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing those services.

i. In collaboration with the LEA assist unaccompanied youth in placement/enrollment decisions, including considering the youth's wishes in those decisions, and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal such decisions.

j. Assist children who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.

k. Collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children.

l. Indicate that a child or youth or his/her immediate family is eligible to participate in a local district program and authorized to affirm such individual/family for the HUD homeless assistance program, provided that local has received the mandatory training.

m. In collaboration with the LEA provide the State Office of the Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth (Office of the Coordinator) the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to fulfill the federally required data collection.

n. Participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined appropriate by the Office of the Coordinator.

o. Ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless children and youth receive professional development and other support and that unaccompanied youths:

i. are enrolled in school.
ii. have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards the State has established for other children and youth; and

iii. are informed of their status as independent youths under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087VV) and that they may obtain assistance from the district to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

iv. are entitled to knowledge of and have access to all educational, medical or similar records in their cumulative record that is maintained by CREC.

p. In collaboration with the LEA coordinate special education services for homeless children and youth identified as eligible.