

Students

Students Experiencing Homelessness

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 experiencing homelessness. No child or youth experiencing homelessness 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 children experiencing homelessness.

Students experiencing homelessness 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 Students Experiencing Homelessness 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 children and youths who are experiencing homelessness.

(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 et seq. Protection of children from abuse. Reports required of certain professional persons. When child may be removed from surrounding without court order.

46b-120 Definitions.

P.A. 21-199 An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Relating to Education and Workforce Development

Federal laws

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §11431-11435, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, P.L. 114-95.

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CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL
 Hartford, Connecticut

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

Definitions:

Children and youth who are experiencing homelessness 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 migratory children and children who are experiencing homelessness.

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

“School of origin” is the school the child or youth experiencing homelessness 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 Students Experiencing Homelessness:

- a. CREC policy must remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of children and youth who are experiencing homelessness, including such barriers as outstanding fees, fines, or absences.
- b. CREC must continue the education of the child or youth experiencing homelessness in the school of origin if the family so desires; or must assist in enrolling the child or youth in any public school that students who are not experiencing homelessness and who live in the area where the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.
- c. CREC must presume that keeping a children or youth who are experiencing homelessness in the school of origin is in their 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 child or youth experiencing homelessness 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 right of a child or youth who is experiencing homelessness to attend the school or origin extends for the duration of homelessness.
- f. If a child or youth experiencing homelessness becomes permanently housed during the academic year, they are entitled to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- g. A child or youth who experiences homelessness in between academic years is entitled to attend the school of origin for the following academic year.
- h. Information about the living situation of a student experiencing homelessness 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 students. who are experiencing homelessness. 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 Students Experiencing Homelessness:

1. Educational services provided to students experiencing homelessness are to be comparable to those received by other students in the school.
2. Students who are experiencing homelessness 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. Students experiencing homelessness 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 Students Experiencing Homelessness:

1. CREC will collaboratively work with LEAs to provide transportation services. Services must be comparable to those provided other students.
2. Students who are experiencing homelessness 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 student experiencing homelessness 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 student experiencing homelessness 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 Students Experiencing Homelessness

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

The CREC liaison must:

- a. Ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies and entities.
- b. Ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have a full and equal

opportunity to succeed in the CREC school they attend.

- c. In collaboration with the LEA ensure that families and children and youths experiencing homelessness have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, preschool, remedial, special education, limited English proficiency, vocational education, gifted/talented and school nutrition programs.
- d. In collaboration with the LEA ensure that families and children and youths experiencing homelessness receive referrals to health, dental, mental health and substance abuse services; housing services; and other appropriate services.
- e. Ensure that parents/guardians of children experiencing homelessness 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 children and youths experiencing homelessness 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 children and youths experiencing homelessness 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 children experiencing homelessness.
- l. Indicate that a child or youth or immediate family is eligible to participate in a local district program and that the liaison is authorized to affirm such individual/family for the HUD homeless assistance program, provided the liaison 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.

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- o. Ensure that school personnel providing services to children and youth experiencing homelessness 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 children and youth experiencing homelessness identified as eligible.

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