

Each school in the District shall maintain forms provided by the Commissioner of Education for designating a homeless child's district of attendance. These forms must be provided to any homeless child or parent or guardian who seeks to enroll a child in school. The District's liaison for homeless students shall assist the homeless child and/or parent or guardian in understanding their rights under the law and provide them with information regarding the educational and related opportunities available to them.

School placement decisions for homeless children will be based on the "best interest of the child" and shall:

1. presume that keeping the child in the school of origin is in the child's best interest, except when doing so is contract to the wishes of the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth; and
2. consider student-centered factors such as the effect of mobility on student achievement, education, health and safety of the child, giving priority to the wishes of the child's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth.

If the District wishes to send a homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision, together with a statement regarding the right to appeal the placement process. The Superintendent or designee shall refer any such dispute to the District's liaison for the homeless for resolution. The homeless child must be enrolled in the school sought by the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth pending resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.

Admission Procedures

Upon designation, the Superintendent of Schools or designee shall immediately:

1. ensure that a designation form is given to the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth and review the designation form to ensure that it is complete;
2. admit the homeless child even if the child or his/her parent or guardian is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment or there is an unresolved dispute regarding eligibility, school selection or enrollment;
3. where applicable, make a written request to the school district where a copy of the child's records are located for a copy of the homeless child's school records;
4. notify the liaison for homeless children of the child's admission. The liaison shall:
 - a. notify the child and/or the parent or guardian of the educational and related opportunities available to homeless children including transportation to the school of origin, and help arrange for transportation and other services such as those under Title I, Section 504, IDEA, and federal school meals;
 - b. ensure that the child receives the educational services for which they are eligible;
 - c. make necessary referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services; and
 - d. ensure that any enrollment disputes are mediated promptly and in accordance with law;
 - e. when assisting unaccompanied youth in placement or enrollment decisions, give priority to the views of such youth, and inform them of their status as "independent students" for purposes of applying for federal financial aid for college and assist with that process; and
 - f. assist in obtaining required immunizations, health screenings, immunization records or health records.

The Superintendent or designee shall forward a copy of the designation form to the Commissioner of Education and the school district of origin where applicable.

Unless the homeless child is entitled to transportation provided by the Division for Youth or the Department of Social Services, the District shall provide transportation services to the child in accordance with applicable law.

Transportation

The district shall promptly provide transportation for homeless students currently attending district schools as required by applicable law. In general, the district shall ensure that transportation is provided to homeless students enrolled in the district who attend a school of origin, including a publicly funded preschool administered by the district or SED, even if the student lives outside the district's boundaries, as long as it is within 50 miles each way. Transportation shall be provided for the duration of homelessness, through the remainder of the school year in which the student becomes permanently housed, and one additional year if that is the student's final year in the school.

Dispute Resolution Process

If, after the Superintendent reviews the designation form, he/she finds that the student is either not homeless, not entitled to attend the District's school, or not entitled to transportation (if requested) the Superintendent or designee will do the following:

1. Contact the District's homeless liaison to assist in dispute resolution process.
2. Contact the student and parent (if available) and inform them of their opportunity to provide more information prior to the District making a final determination.

If, after consideration of any additional information and input from the homeless liaison, the Superintendent makes a final determination that a student is not homeless, or not entitled to enrollment or transportation, he/she must provide the student's parent or guardian, or the student, if the student is an unaccompanied youth, with written notice that the student is not entitled to their request. This written notice must also:

1. state the rationale/basis for the District's determination;
2. state the date as of which the student will be excluded from the District's schools (or transportation), which shall be at least 30 days from receipt of the written notice;
3. advise that the District's final determination may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner);
4. provide the name and contact information for the District's homeless liaison;
5. inform the student's parent or guardian or the student, if the student is an unaccompanied youth, that the District's homeless liaison is required to assist him/her in filing such an appeal; and
6. include, as an attachment, the form needed to file an appeal to the Commissioner.

The Superintendent must ensure that the District's final decision is delivered to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in a timely manner. The student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if requested) until the District provides written notice of its final determination and for a minimum of 30 days after receipt of the determination to give the student's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth the opportunity to appeal to the Commissioner.

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