

HOMELESS AND UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

To the extent practical and as required by law, the school system will work with homeless/unaccompanied youth and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring enrollment and attendance of homeless and unaccompanied youth not currently attending school. Homeless and unaccompanied youth will be provided services for which they are eligible, including but not limited to: Title I, EIP or other intervention programs; special education; limited English proficiency programs; vocational and technical education programs; gifted programs; and school nutrition programs.

Any reference to “homeless” students in this regulation would also apply to unaccompanied youth.

Definition

Section 103(a) of the McKinney Act defines the term homeless as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence including:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Being abandoned in hospitals;
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
7. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

Section 103(c) excludes from the definition of homeless "any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of Congress or a State Law."

Requirement: Establishing Residence

1. A parent/guardian and student with a questionable place of residence may present themselves to enroll at a public school. School administrative personnel should make a determination of the student's residential status based upon the definition in Section 103(a) 1, 2 of the McKinney Act. If the student is identified as homeless via the definition, the school shall carefully consider options provided by the law and the information presented in the next item.
2. Homeless students have two options for enrollment:
 - (a) Continue enrollment in the school/school district attended prior to homelessness;
 - (b) Enroll in the school/school district where the student is presently living. Before making a decision, school administrative personnel should consult with parent/legal guardian and/or student and carefully consider what is in the best interest of the student (e.g. family plans, educational services, special programs, transportation, and length of stay in sheltering facility).

3. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra- and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families residing in the district.

Requirement: School and Health Records

1. If a homeless student wants to enroll without a transcript/grade record, birth certificate, and/or immunization and health records, school administrative personnel should contact the former school by phone to request the student's records and discuss immunization information and tentative placement. The school principal or designee may allow a 30-calendar day waiver of the immunization certificate requirement, pursuant to Policy JBC and as allowed in O.C.G.A. 20-2-771. The student should then be enrolled. If it is determined that no records are available or exist, school administrative personnel should obtain a release from the parent or guardian to facilitate release of information by the former school or school district. (EXHIBIT - JBCA).
2. The school administrative personnel should contact the local health department to obtain information about the immunization status of a homeless student. If there are no records of the homeless student's immunization status, an appointment for the student should be made with the local health department and follow-up provided to ensure that the student has been immunized.
3. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with the district's policies.

Requirement: Guardianship/Custody

1. If a homeless student arrives at the school without a parent or legal guardian and wants to enroll, the school shall enroll the student and make every effort to contact the parent/guardian to complete the enrollment process. School personnel shall maintain documentation of all written/verbal communication and home visits to contact the parent/guardian.
2. In exceptional cases where no parent/guardian can be located, school personnel will contact the local social services agency (DFCS) to report the homeless child or a child in need of assistance, and in the interim, appoint an adult (relative, friend or volunteer) who will act in place of the parent to make educational decisions. A "Release of Information" form may be used to assist in obtaining the necessary authorization as part of this process. (Exhibit - JBCA)
3. The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

Transfer/Withdrawal

1. Homeless students often leave school without officially transferring or withdrawing from the school. Applicable procedures in Policy JCB should be followed in this instance.

Receiving school: If a homeless student is transferring without the proper transfer or withdrawal form from the previous school, the school shall enroll the student and contact the former school for transfer and/or withdrawal information.

Sending school: The school shall give requested information by telephone and forward records for the homeless student within ten (10) business days.

2. Homeless students may return to their former school or transfer to a new school within the same academic year. In the event that a homeless student returns to their former school or transfers to a new school within the same academic year, every effort to remove the student from withdrawal status and place on reentry or transfer status shall be made. School administrative personnel should contact the previous school by telephone to request the student's records and discuss educational placement. In any even student records should be forwarded within ten (10) business days.

Transportation

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. Transportation shall be provided for the duration of the transition upon request by the parent/guardian. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in the district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally. Transportation services may be provided through district transportation, gas vouchers, or public means.

Resolution of Disputes

Any dispute in regard to providing a public education to a child designated as homeless shall follow Board policy JCE-Complaints and Grievances. In the event the dispute cannot be resolved locally, the parent may request a review of the dispute by the Georgia Department of Education.

The Georgia Department of Education may make an on-site visit to further clarify and resolve the issue. All complaints must be resolved within 60 days unless given written extension. The State Board of Education will review, hear, and rule on grievances from students or the Cartersville School Board which have not been resolved. The decision of the State Board shall be final.

Rescinds: **JBCA-R** Revised: 5/13/13, 1/25/16, 2/2/17