

Pepin Area School District

HOMELESS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy

It is the policy of the board to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational programs, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State of Wisconsin academic standards, are not segregated on the basis of their status as homeless and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The term "homeless children and youths" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youths who:

- are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- are living in emergency shelters
- are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement
- have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- runaway children or children who are abandoned
- migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition.

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with parents or in the case of unaccompanied youth the local educational agency liaison and may be documented through a variety of forms such as Homeless Education Program: School Selection Form and/or through direct contact with Pepin Area School District staff.

Procedure

School Selection

Placement in a school shall, according to the child's best interest:

- continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, or for the duration of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year

- Enroll the child or youth in any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

In determining the best interests of the child or youth, to the extent feasible the child or youth will be kept in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, for the duration of homelessness.

In the case of unaccompanied children and youth, the school district homeless liaison will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the requests of such unaccompanied youth.

The school of origin means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

School selection may be documented through a variety of forms such as Homeless Education Program: School Selection Form and/or through direct contact with Pepin Area School District staff.

Enrollment

The school selected shall immediately enroll the child/youth, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" are defined to mean attending school and participating fully in school activities.

Residency

A homeless child or youth is a resident if the child is personally present somewhere within the district with a purpose to remain but not necessarily to remain permanently.

The child or youth shall be considered a resident when living with a parent, guardian, or person in loco parent is not solely for school purposes or for participation in extra curricular activities. Homeless students who do not live with their parents or guardians may enroll themselves in school.

Guardianship

For purposes of school placement, any parent, guardian or person in loco parentis who has legal or physical custody of a homeless child or youth shall enroll that child or youth directly in the Pepin School.

Once a child or youth is enrolled in and attending a school, the Guardian Responsibilities form should be completed within a reasonable period of time for those children or youth who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian, if possible.

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, such as

- Preschool programs
- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as ESL or special education programs
- Programs for "At Risk" students
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- School nutrition programs
- Title I services
- Before and/or After School programs

Transportation

At the request of the parent, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local agency liaison or designee, transportation will be provided for homeless children and youth to the school of origin, school of attendance area, for the duration of homelessness. Transportation costs are the shared responsibility of the two school districts.

Once permanent housing is found, the family has a choice to stay in the school they are attending, school of origin or attend the school where they have found housing.

Permanent housing is defined as any signed lease or long-term approved living situation. Self-paying day to day in a motel is not considered permanent housing.

In the case where the school of origin and current permanent residence are different LEA's, the family is responsible for transportation through the end of the school year.

Local Educational Agency Homeless Liaison

The Local Educational Agency Homeless Liaison or designee shall ensure that:

- homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies
- homeless children and youth enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the district.
- homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services.
- the parents or guardians of homeless a child and any unaccompanied homeless youth is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the child/youth.
- public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in such public places as schools, meal sites, shelters and other locations frequented by low income families.
- compliance with all policies and procedures and mediate enrollment disputes.
- the parents or guardians of a homeless child or youth, and unaccompanied youth, are informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin or to the school that is selected.
- coordination of services between Pepin Area School District and other homeless family service providers.

- assistance is provided to children and youth who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- students are not segregated as being homeless.
- programs for homeless students are coordinated with other federal and local programs.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.

The Local Educational Homeless Liaison shall assist the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth with the dispute process as expeditiously as possible after receiving the notice of the dispute. Any dispute will follow local grievance procedures as outlined by the school district.

Appeals will go to the District Superintendent. The parent or guardian of the child or youth, or unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the appealed decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision to the the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Policy Adopted: