

Sparta Area School District

Article 531 - Homeless Education Program

It is the policy of the board to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational programs as provided to other children and youths who reside in the district. They shall be provided services comparable to services offered other children attending District schools, including transportation services, educational services for which the children/youths meet eligibility criteria (e.g., special education, Title I programming, gifted and talented programming), vocational and technical education programs and school nutrition programs. No homeless child or youth shall be required to attend a separate school or program for homeless children and shall not be stigmatized by school personnel.

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:

- a. Are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- b. Are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- c. Are living in emergency shelters
- d. Are abandoned in hospitals
- e. 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, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- f. Runaway children or children who are abandoned
- g. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, or similar settings

The District provides immediate identification and enrollment to homeless children and youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation.

The District will follow the dispute resolution process and assist parents/unaccompanied youth with the process as the need arises.

The District maintains and makes available in a timely fashion, any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding each homeless child or youth.

The District ensures that, according to the students’ best interest, homeless children and youth are kept in their school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child’s or youth’s parent or guardian.

The District will provide or arrange transportation for homeless students, including working with neighboring districts when a homeless student is attending in one district and enrolled in another.

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.

The Director of Pupil Services will be the Local Educational Agency Liaison for homeless children and youths and will ensure that:

- a. Homeless children and youths residing in the District are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- b. Homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school in the District.
- c. Homeless families, children and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services.
- d. The parent/guardian of a homeless 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.
- e. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services such as the schools and family shelters.
- f. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with legal requirements.
- g. The parent/guardian of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth is fully informed of transportation services that may be available to them under the law and assist them in accessing such transportation services.

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the child or youth in transition shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall also have rights as a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I services while the dispute is pending. The school where the dispute arises shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and shall immediately refer the parent or youth to the liaison. The liaison shall ensure the student is enrolled in the school of his/her choice (unless prohibited by enrollment restrictions or charter agreements), receiving other services to which he/she is entitled during the dispute resolution process, and shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. 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. This includes the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision to the Office of Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The liaison shall keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are repeatedly delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition.

Legal Reference: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
(Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act)
Wisconsin State Statute 118.75

Cross Reference: Administrative Rule 527 – Homeless Education Procedures
Article 412 – School Choice/Attendance Area
Article 419 – Programs for Children At-Risk

Adopted: August 24, 2004

Revised: May 23, 2017