

JBC(1)-R Homeless Students

12/5/24

RATIONALE/OBJECTIVE:

The Cobb County School District (District) seeks to ensure that each homeless student has equal access to the same, free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other District students.

RULE:**A. IDENTIFICATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS:**

1. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Act), 42 U.S.C. § 11431 *et. seq.*, defines homeless students as those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes:
 - a. **Children and youth who:**
 - (1) Share the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - (2) Live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - (3) Live in emergency or transitional shelters; or
 - (4) Are abandoned in hospitals.
 - b. Children and youth who 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;
 - c. Children and youth who live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or
 - d. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances outlined in items a, b, or c above.
2. In addition, a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian and is living in one of the situations listed above may be considered an unaccompanied youth.
3. The principal or designee shall have the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth complete Form JBC(1)-1 (Student Residency Statement) or verbally provide information to a designated school staff member who will submit a referral. The Homeless Education Program office staff will determine homeless eligibility according to the above definition.
 - a. Eligibility is determined for the current school year only and renewal for the following year is not automatic.
 - b. The parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth should re-submit a new Student Residency Statement (Form JBC(1)-1) each school year (after July 1) or verbally provide information to a designated school staff member who will submit a new referral. The Homeless Education Program office staff will determine homeless re-eligibility for any subsequent school year.
4. The school shall provide the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth a copy of Form JBC(1)-5 (Information on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act).

B. ENROLLMENT/WITHDRAWAL OF HOMELESS STUDENTS:

1. An identified homeless student should be enrolled immediately even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment.
2. If a homeless unaccompanied youth arrives at school, the student shall be enrolled immediately and the school social worker (SSW) notified. The SSW shall contact the unaccompanied youth and complete the enrollment process. Students must meet the District's age eligibility criteria for enrollment.
3. Homeless students qualify for free breakfast and lunch.

4. When homeless students enroll without records (i.e., transcripts/grade reports, birth certificate, immunizations/health records) the Principal or designee shall:
 - a. Contact the former school to request the student's records and discuss immunization information and tentative placement;
 - b. Create a cumulative record if it is determined that the records are not available;
 - c. Refer the student to public health and provide follow-up to ensure that the student obtains necessary screenings, immunization or other required health records, if there are no immunization or other required health records; and
 - d. Contact the Homeless Education Program (HEP) staff for additional assistance.
5. Parents/guardians must provide the school with a current phone number and address.
6. **Withdrawal:**
Homeless students often leave school without officially withdrawing. If the school is contacted by another district for a homeless student's records, requested information shall be provided and school records sent within 15 days to the receiving school district.

C. ACADEMIC CREDIT:

In accordance with federal and state policy, a student's homeless status shall not be a barrier to receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school. Additional information regarding students receiving appropriate credit may be found in Administrative Rule IHA-R (Grading Systems).

D. SCHOOL ENROLLMENT:

1. According to the homeless child's or youth's best interests, the student may:
 - a. Enroll in the school serving the attendance zone where the student resides; or
 - b. Continue enrollment in the school of origin, when feasible. The school of origin is the school the student attended when permanently housed, the school in which the student was last enrolled, including preschool, or the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.
2. When determining which school the child will attend, the District will base the decision upon the student's best interest. Student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest will be considered, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the HEP staff will assist in the placement and enrollment decisions, giving priority to the youth's views.
3. A homeless student who attends his/her school of origin in accordance with paragraph D. 1. above may:
 - a. Attend that school for the duration of homelessness;
 - b. Stay in the school for the remainder of the academic year if the student becomes permanently housed during the academic year; or
 - c. Attend their school for the duration of homelessness if the student becomes homeless between or during academic years.

E. TRANSPORTATION:

Transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin if requested by the parent/guardian where required by federal law at 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii). In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the transportation request will be made by the HEP staff.

F. DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

1. If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection or enrollment in school, the parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision, including the right to appeal. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the HEP staff will provide written notification to such youth including the right to appeal (Form JBC(1)-4 [Written Notification and Dispute Resolution Form]).
2. If a parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth disputes the District's decision:
 - a. The student shall be immediately admitted to the requested school, pending resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals;

- b. The dispute shall be referred to the District’s HEP staff who will consult with the Director of Federal Programs, Title I/HEP, for resolution within 7 business days of receipt of the Dispute Resolution Form;
- c. If the matter is not resolved at that level, the Superintendent or designee shall issue the District’s decision within 10 business days of second dispute by parent/guardian.
- d. If the matter is not resolved at that level, the parent/guardian may contact the Georgia Department of Education Grants Program Manager.

G. ROLE OF THE HEP STAFF:

The role of the District’s HEP staff is to provide that:

- 1. Homeless students, families, and unaccompanied youth:
 - a. Are appropriately identified;
 - b. Enroll in and have an equal opportunity to succeed in school;
 - c. Have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible;
 - d. Are referred to the SSW, if other support resources are needed.
- 2. Parents/guardians of homeless students are made aware of educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with a meaningful opportunity to participate in their children’s education;
- 3. Public notices of the educational rights of homeless students are disseminated in schools and locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children and youths including such places as family shelters;
- 4. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the Act;
- 5. Parents/guardians and unaccompanied youth are informed of the transportation services provided by the District, including transportation to the school of origin, when required;
- 6. Students who do not have immunization or medical records are assisted;
- 7. Collaborate and coordinate with the Georgia Department of Education Grants Program Consultants and community and school personnel responsible for providing education and related support services to homeless children and youth;
- 8. School personnel providing services to homeless children and youth receive professional development and support; and
- 9. Unaccompanied youth:
 - a. Are enrolled in school;
 - b. Have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as established for other children and youth; and
 - c. Are informed of their status as independent students under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that the youths may obtain assistance from the local educational agency liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of FAFSA.

Revision Timeline*:

Adopted: 8/28/03

Revised: 5/12/04

Reclassified an Administrative Rule: 9/1/04

Revised: 8/10/05; 9/10/08

Revised and re-coded: 1/7/13 (Previously coded as Administrative Rule JFABD)

Revised: 6/14/17; 2/15/18; 7/1/18; 12/5/24

**Administrative Rules and Board Policies are reviewed on a regular basis. Dates indicate when revisions were made, not the dates of document review.*

Division: Academics

Legal Reference

O.C.G.A. 20-2-150

Eligibility for enrollment

O.C.G.A. 20-2-293

Student attending school in system other than system of student's residence

O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1

Mandatory education for children between 6 and 16

O.C.G.A. 20-2-694

Administration/enforcement of attendance reqts.

Rule 160-5-1-.28

Student Enrollment and Withdrawal

42 USC 11431

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act