

TOPEKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	REGULATION NUMBER: 8500-1
SUBJECT: HOMELESS STUDENTS	DATE OF ISSUE: 06/05/08 <hr/> REVISIONS: 12/17/18 <hr/> PREPARING OFFICE: INSTRUCTION & LEARNING

I. DEFINITION

Homeless students shall, by definition, include the following:

1. Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
2. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
3. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children who meet one of the above-described circumstances.

For the purposes of this policy, "school of origin" is defined as the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

II. ENROLLMENT/PLACEMENT

- A. The best interest of the child, with parent or guardian involvement, shall be considered in determining whether the child should be enrolled in the school of origin or the school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the homeless child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. To the extent feasible, and in accordance with the child or youth's best interest, the child or youth should continue his or her education in the school of origin, except when contrary to the wishes of the parent or guardian. If the youth is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, the homeless coordinator will consider the views of the youth in deciding where the youth will be educated. 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.
- B. The school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization records, proof of residency or other documentation. However, the district may require a parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth to submit contact information.
- C. The district must provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the homeless child or youth's parent or guardian, or to the homeless youth if unaccompanied, if the district sends the child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or other than a school requested by the parent or guardian.

HOMELESS STUDENTS (continued)

- D. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school where enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. The child, youth, parent or guardian shall be referred to the district homeless coordinator, who will carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
- E. A complaint regarding the placement or education of a homeless child or youth shall first be presented orally and informally to the district's homeless coordinator. If the complaint is not promptly resolved, the complainant may present a formal written complaint (grievance) to the homeless coordinator. The written complaint must include the following information: date of filing; description of concerns; the name of the person or persons involved; and a statement of the action taken during the informal charge stage. Within five (5) school days after receiving the complaint, the coordinator shall state a decision in writing to the complainant, with supporting evidence and reasons. In addition, the coordinator will inform the superintendent of the formal complaint and the disposition.

III. SERVICES

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the district including, but not limited to:

- Transportation services;
- Educational services for which the child meets the eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and gifted and talented students;
- Vocational programs and technical education;
- School meals programs;
- Preschool programs;
- Before- and after-school care programs; and
- Programs for students with limited English proficiency.

Homeless students will not be segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school based on the students' status as homeless.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

If it is in the best interest of the homeless child or youth to attend the school of origin, transportation to and from that school will be provided at the request of the parent or guardian or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless coordinator. If the student's temporary housing is outside the attendance area of the school of origin, then the district will work with the school of origin to agree on a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for transporting the child. If an agreement cannot be reached, the costs will be shared equally.

V. RECORDS

Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs of each homeless child or youth shall be maintained so that appropriate services may be given the student, so that necessary referrals can be made and so that records may be transferred in a timely fashion when a homeless child or youth enters another school district. Copies of records shall be made available upon request to students or parents in accordance with the Family

HOMELESS STUDENTS (continued)

Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

VI. COORDINATOR

- A. The superintendent will annually designate an individual to act as the district's homeless coordinator. The district shall inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of and the identity of the district homeless coordinator. The homeless coordinator will ensure that:**
- 1. Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;**
 - 2. Homeless children and youths enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the district;**
 - 3. Homeless families, children and youths receive educational services for which such families, children and youths are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start and preschool programs administered by the district and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and other appropriate services;**
 - 4. The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;**
 - 5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens;**
 - 6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law;**
 - 7. The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected;**
 - 8. Unaccompanied youths will be assisted in placement or enrollment decisions, their views will be considered and they will be provided notice of the right to appeal; and**
 - 9. Children or youths who need to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, will receive assistance.**