

# ADMISSION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

Code **JFABD-R** Issued **11/07**

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## Definitions

*Enrollment* - attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

*School of origin* - the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school where last enrolled.

*Homeless student* - individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes the following.

- Student who is sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; is living in a motel, hotel, trailer park or camping ground due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; is living in emergency or transitional shelter; is abandoned in a hospital; or is awaiting foster placement.
- Student who has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for a human being.
- Student who is living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station or similar setting.
- Migratory student who qualifies as homeless because the student is living in circumstances described above.

*Unaccompanied student* - includes a student not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian.

## Assignment to school

The district will, according to the student's best interest, continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, or enroll the student in a school in the attendance area in which the homeless student is actually living on the same basis as other students.

In determining the best interest of the student, the district will do the following.

- To the extent feasible, keep a homeless student in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's parent/guardian.
- Provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal and to request a state-level review, if the district sends a homeless student to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian.
- In the case of an unaccompanied student, ensure that the district's liaison helps in placement or enrollment decisions, considers the views of the student and provides notice of the right to appeal and to request a state-level review.

## Enrollment

The district will immediately enroll the student in the school selected even if the student is

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unable to produce records normally required for enrollment such as academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation.

The district will immediately contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations or immunization or medical records, the district will immediately refer the parent/guardian to the district's liaison who will help in obtaining necessary immunizations or records.

### **Records**

Any records ordinarily maintained by the district including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records and evaluations for special services or programs will be maintained so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a homeless student enters a new school or district, consistent with state and federal law.

### **Enrollment disputes**

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the student will be immediately admitted to the school requested pending resolution of the dispute.

The parent/guardian of the student will be provided with a written explanation of the district's decision regarding school selection, including the rights of the parent/guardian or student to appeal the decision.

The student or parent/guardian will be referred to the district's liaison who will ensure the resolution process is carried out as expeditiously as possible. In the case of an unaccompanied student, the district's liaison will ensure the student is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute. That is, during the pendency of any administrative or judicial proceeding regarding an enrollment dispute, the student must continuously be enrolled in school, be provided all relevant services and be allowed to participate fully in all school activities.

When it is determined that a dispute cannot be settled at the district level, the district will do the following in a timely manner.

- Inform the unaccompanied youth or parent/guardian of a homeless child of his/her right to request a South Carolina State Department of Education (SDE) review of the district decision. This request must be made either on the district-supplied request-for-review form or by a telephone interview with the appropriate SDE contact.
- Give the individual a copy of the appropriate form and the SDE contact information.
- Inform the individual that he/she may seek the assistance of advocates or attorneys for the review.

Upon receipt of the submitted request form and any relevant documentation back from the SDE, the district will then send a written response to the SDE and the individual filing the state review request within five business days from receipt of the request-for review form.

*See JFABD- E (1-3) for further information regarding the settlement of enrollment disputes.*

### **Services**

Each homeless student will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students, including the following.

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- transportation services
- education services for which the student is eligible, such as the following
  - Title 1
  - special education
  - programs for students with limited English proficiency
  - professional technical programs
  - talented and gifted programs
- school nutrition programs

### **Coordination**

The district will coordinate the provision of services to homeless students with local social service agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless students and their families. Services will also be provided in cooperation with other districts on interdistrict issues, such as transportation or transfer of school records, to ensure that homeless students have access to available education and related services.

### **District liaison**

The district's liaison will ensure the following.

- Homeless students are identified.
- Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in district schools.
- Homeless families and students receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to health-care services, dental services, mental health services and other appropriate services.
- The parent/guardian of a homeless student is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to the student and is provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of his/her child.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is distributed where such students receive services (e.g., schools, family shelters and soup kitchens).
- Enrollment disputes are mediated.
- The parent/guardian of a homeless student or any unaccompanied student is informed about and assisted in requesting a state-level review of the district's final enrollment decision.
- The parent/guardian of a homeless student, or any unaccompanied student, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected.
- School personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless students and their families are informed of the liaison's duties.

The district's liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the state coordinator, community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless students.

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