

## CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Homeless Student Policy

It is the policy of Canton Public Schools that the academic and educational programs offered to homeless children is no different from that of the general student population. Consistent with Public Law 100-77, the Steward B. McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act and Title VII of this Law which addresses the education of homeless children, procedures pertaining to registration, transportation, record(s) transfer, confidentiality and school choice may be different for individual homeless children. All personnel should be aware of the unique needs of homeless children, adolescents and their families and cooperate to provide a stable and consistent educational experience for the homeless student.

#### **DEFINITION**

The Federal Government defines a homeless child or youth as one who lacks a “fixed regular and adequate residence or has a primary night-time residence not designated as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings” (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Section 103 (A)(1)(2)).

By this definition, the following children are considered homeless:

- Children/adolescents living in family, adolescent battered women and transitional housing shelters.
- Children/adolescents living in cars, abandoned buildings, and on the street.
- Children/adolescents awaiting foster care who are placed in foster homes temporarily, due to lack of shelter space, or as emergency and/or transitional placement.
- Sick or abandoned children. Adolescents in hospitals, who would otherwise be released if they had a place to go.
- Children/adolescents living temporarily in trailer parks or campgrounds because they lack a permanent place to live.
- Runaways and youths who have been “thrown out” of their own home environment or have left due to abuse and who are living in a shelter, on the street, or, who move from one friend’s house to another in a cycle of transiency.
- Children/adolescents living in “doubled up” overcrowded situations, with or without their parents, with friends or relatives because they have been displaced from their previous residence due to an emergency situation.

#### **OUTREACH**

- The Superintendent shall assign a Homeless Education Liaison.
- Public notice shall be made in school buildings and in places in the community

- where homeless students may receive services of the name and contact information for the Homeless Education Liaison.
- Public notice shall be made in school buildings and in places in the community where homeless students may receive services, of the rights of homeless students to equal access to the same free and appropriate public school education as other children and youth.
- The Homeless Liaison, Directors of Student Services, Early Childhood and Early Intervention programs will collaborate to ensure that homeless children are included in the “Child Find” process for early identification of children with special education needs.
- **STAFF EDUCATION**
- The building principal, in collaboration with the Homeless Liaison, will review this policy with staff annually.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

- A student’s homeless status shall remain a confidential matter.

### **REGISTRATION**

- The parent/guardian/social worker shall register the homeless student with the Office of the Superintendent and immediately enter school even though they may not have immunization records, medical records, school records or proof of residency at time of entry.
- Unaccompanied youth may enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, caseworker, older sibling, or the homeless liaison.
- The Office of the Superintendent shall:
  - give written notice of the student’ rights, programs available to the student and a list of referral agencies as well as contact information for the District’s Homeless Liaison to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth at the time of registration.
  - notify the Homeless Liaison, in writing, that the student has enrolled.
  - immediately request school records from the last school of attendance.
- Within one month of enrollment the student/parent/guardian will present:
  - A letter of address verification giving evidence of homelessness
  - Evidence of immunization and physical exam, as required of all students

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- The Homeless Liaison will collaborate with the Director of Student Services to arrange for transportation of the student to and from school.
- The Homeless Liaison will ensure that the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth is fully informed in the language of the home of all transportation services.
- The Director of Student Services will coordinate with the school of origin or school of attendance to coordinate and apportion costs of transportation.

## **STUDENT PLACEMENT/ASSIGNMENT**

- According to the best interest of the homeless student, the district either
  1. continues the student's education in the student's school of origin for the duration of homelessness and if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year, for the remainder of that academic year: or
  2. enrolls the student in any public school that non homeless students who live in the attendance area where the student is actually living (with or without parent) are eligible to attend.
- The Homeless Liaison will coordinate with the Principal and other administrators to ensure equal access to programs.
- Placement in programs including Title I services, special education services, early intervention programs, pre-school services, and any other programs including co-curricular or extra curricular programs that would otherwise be available to the student if the student was not homeless, will be consistent with patterns of placement of students who are not homeless.
- The district Homeless Education Liaison and the Title I Director must collaborate to ensure that an assessment of the educational needs of the homeless student is conducted, and that services are designed to meet the identified needs of the student even if the student does not attend a Title I participating school.
- The principal shall send written notice of opportunities for parent/guardian participation and other relevant information with the student unless the parent/guardian arranges for other means of communication with the school.

## **FOOD SERVICES**

- The Homeless Liaison will collaborate with the Director of Food Services to arrange for all homeless students to be included in the free lunch program.
- The child's name, the effective date and signature of the Homeless Liaison must be accepted in lieu of free and reduced meal eligibility application.
- Host families applying for free and reduced meals for their own children, may include the homeless student and family as "household members" if they are contributing to the financial support of the homeless individuals, however they must also report income from the homeless individuals.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

- The Homeless Liaison will collaborate with the School Nurse to make referrals for dental, medical, or mental health services when appropriate.

## **STUDENT RECORDS (see registration above)**

- Cumulative School Records shall be maintained by the school of attendance

## **DISPUTES OVER ENROLLMENT**

- When there is a dispute over the enrollment of the child or unaccompanied youth:

1. the school in which enrollment is sought immediately admits the homeless student pending resolution of the dispute.
2. On the day of the decision, the district will provide notice of the enrollment decision using the “Massachusetts Department of Education, *Homeless Education Advisory 2003 – 7A: School District Notification of Enrollment Decision*” form. (attached)
  - a. to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth,
  - b. to the Homeless Education Liaison and
  - c. to the Mass Dept of Education
3. The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth, will be advised of the student’s right to appeal the decision and will be referred to the Homeless Liaison. who will assist them in the dispute resolution process, including
  - explaining in written clear, easy to understand language the details of the dispute process
  - providing the option to obtain independent information including a list of Massachusetts Advocates for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths contacts, and
  - and assistance completing and submitting the form, *Homeless Education Advisory 2003 – 7B: Appeal of School District’s Enrollment Decision*. (attached)

**Reference:** Public Law 100-77, The Stewart B. McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act and Title VII of this Law.

**Attachments:**

- (1) Homeless Education Advisory 2003 - 7A: School District Notification of Enrollment Decision
- (2) Homeless Education Advisory 2003 – 7B: Appeal of School District Enrollment Decision

Policy Adopted: By Canton School Committee on November 17, 2005