

**HOPKINTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT POLICY**

PURPOSE

The goal of the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act* is to ensure that each homeless child, or youth, has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education that is provided to other children and youths, including a public preschool education. The Hopkinton Public Schools will comply with this legislation.

DEFINITION

The *Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education* defines homeless children and youth as follows:

Individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters and transitional housing for the mentally ill), an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This definition includes:

- Children and youth who are sharing 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;
- 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;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Unaccompanied youth – a youth who not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

LIAISONS

The McKinney-Vento Act requires Hopkinton Public Schools to designate a staff person to serve as the Homeless Education Liaison, whose role is to assist homeless students in enrolling in school and to ensure that they receive the educational services for which they are eligible. This liaison may have other duties within the school district. The Homeless Education Liaison is the district's Director of Student Services.

ENROLLMENT

The Hopkinton Public Schools must immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment, such as school records, medical records or proof of residency.

Furthermore:

- Homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin, or to attend school where they are temporarily residing;
- Students who chose to remain in their school of origin have the right to remain there until the end of the school year in which they get permanent housing.
- The Homeless Education Liaison must assist students who arrive without records by contacting previously attended school system to obtain the required records.

TRANSPORTATION

The Hopkinton Public Schools will provide transportation at the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to and from the school of origin. Furthermore:

- If the homeless student continues to live in the area served by the district in which the school of origin is located, that district must provide or arrange transportation;
- If the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his or her education at the school of origin, the district of origin, and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin; and
- If the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and the costs must be shared equally.

ACCESS TO COMPARABLE SERVICES

Homeless students are to be provided services and education programs comparable to those received by other students and for which they meet eligibility criteria, such as services provided under *Title I* or similar state or local programs; programs for students with disabilities, programs for students with limited English proficiency; vocational or technical programs; gifted and talented programs; and school nutrition programs.

To expedite the delivery of nutritional benefits, school officials may accept documentation that students are homeless from the district's Homeless Education Liaison as the determination of eligibility for free lunch.

ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL

Homeless preschoolers are provided the same opportunity to attend preschool as non-homeless preschoolers. The Hopkinton Public School's District Homeless Education Liaison will work with the district's preschool staff to insure that homeless preschoolers have the same opportunities as other children to participate in the benefits of the preschool program.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If a dispute arises over enrollment, the Hopkinton Public Schools will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought as the dispute resolution is pending. When a resolution has been determined, the school district must provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a both a written statement of the school's decision and a notice of the right to appeal the decision. The Hopkinton Public Schools shall refer the unaccompanied youth, parent or guardian to the Homeless Education Liaison, who will oversee the dispute resolution process. The final decision in such a situation resides with Massachusetts Commissioner of Education.

UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH AND YOUTH IN STATE CARE OR CUSTODY

Unaccompanied youth are youth who are homeless, that is, not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian; and not in the custody of a state agency. This definition includes youth living on the street, in inadequate housing, denied housing by their families, those who have left home voluntarily (even when their parent/s want them to return home), and youth doubled up with friends or relatives. Also, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has determined that children and youth in state care or custody who have been placed out of their homes in temporary, transitional or emergency living placements and are awaiting foster care placement are considered homeless.

Unaccompanied youth or students in state care or custody who are awaiting foster care are entitled to the same educational rights and services, including transportation, under *McKinney-Vento* as any homeless child or youth in the care of their parent(s)/guardian(s).

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Second Reading	February 25, 2010
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Policy Amended	
Legal References	Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act of January 2002 34 CFR Part 200
Policy Cross Reference	
Procedure Reference	