



FEDERAL PROGRAMS

HOMELESS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DECATUR COUNTY 2024-2025

Homeless Contacts:

Homeless Liaison & Director of Federal Programs – Chip Davis (cdavis@dcboe.com) 248-2835

Social Worker/Homeless Contact – Tia Williams (tiwilliams@dcboe.com), 248-2842.

Building contacts – as assigned at each site

DEFINITION

- Children and youth in transition means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education, including preschool, and lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:
 - 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, camping grounds or trailer parks due to 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 private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting; and
 - migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth shall be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above. The more general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.

Enroll and enrollment mean attending school and participating fully in school activities.

Immediate means without delay.

Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

School of origin means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Homeless Codes for Infinite Campus (Completed by the Office of Federal Programs)

1. Live in emergency transitional shelters; FEMA trailer; AWAITING foster care placement (keep on homeless list all year)
2. Sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason (are not contributing to household daily expenses);
3. Abandoned in hospital; living in car; primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation; OR
4. Live in hotel/motel, camp grounds or trailer park due to alternative adequate housing;

Additional Definition: Unaccompanied youth – means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above.

IDENTIFICATION

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the liaison will identify children and youth in transition in the district, both in and out of school. The liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth as in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to inquire about possible housing trouble upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student, and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison. Community partners in identification may include: family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in centers, welfare departments and other social service agencies, street outreach teams, faith-based organizations, truancy and attendance officers, local homeless coalitions and legal services.

The liaison will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district, where they are living, their academic achievement (including performance on state- and district-wide assessments), and the reasons for any enrollment delays, interruptions in their education or school transfers.

SCHOOL SELECTION

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin, or to attend any school that housed students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and our school district. Students who change schools have been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. High mobility rates have also been shown to lower test scores for stable students. Keeping students in their schools of origin enhances their academic and social growth, while permitting our schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition shall remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, unless that is against the parent's or youth's wishes. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition, and until the end of any

academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years.

Feasibility shall be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent's or youth's wishes. Potential feasibility considerations include:

- Safety of the student;
- Continuity of instruction;
- Likely area of family's or youth's future housing;
- Time remaining in the academic year;
- Anticipated length of stay in temporary living situation;
- School placement of siblings; and
- Whether the student has special needs that would render the commute harmful.

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin (see below) and services under federal and other programs, shall not be considered in determining feasibility.

School Enrollment Information for Identified School.

New Registration:

As part of the registration packet, parents complete the Student Housing Questionnaire. If parent/guardian checks anything in Section A, give the parent an MVP brochure and tell them that a social worker will contact them. Then you should contact the school social worker who will arrange to get the form from your school. MVP Building contact should keep a copy of the 2019-2020 Student Housing Questionnaire. The Student Housing Questionnaire will also be a part of every student's back to school packet.

Enrolled Student:

If you suspect that a student is homeless, complete social worker referral, checking the homeless block, and give information as to why you suspect that student is homeless. MVP Building Contact should keep a copy for school records. Contact the social worker assigned to your school.

If you have a student that you know qualifies as homeless that you have already been assisting, add their name to the monthly reporting form and indicate all services provided.

Enrollment

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have school enrollment documents readily available. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment must immediately enroll any child or youth in transition. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency;

- Transcripts/school records (The enrolling school must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent and previous schools or teachers.);
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, the school must refer students to the liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state registries, and school- or community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.);
- Proof of guardianship;
- Birth certificate;
- Any other document requirements;
- Unpaid school fees;
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes; and
- Any factor related to the student's living situation.

Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling or liaison

Transportation

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her school of origin. To avoid such forced school transfers, at a parent's request, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation shall be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during the pendency of disputes. The liaison shall request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will only be considered in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the student, as discussed above. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Schools and the liaison shall use the district transportation form to process transportation requests. Requests shall be processed and transportation arranged without delay. If the student in transition is living and attending school in this district, this district shall arrange transportation. If the student in transition is living in this district but attending school in another, or attending school in this district but living in another, this district will follow the inter-district transportation agreement to determine who must arrange transportation. It is this district's policy that inter-district disputes shall not result in a student in transition missing school. If such a dispute arises, this district will arrange transportation and immediately bring the matter to the attention of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

In addition to receiving transportation to and from the school of origin upon request, children and youth in transition shall also be provided with other transportation services comparable to those offered to housed students.

Services

Children and youth in transition shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, including:

- Transportation (as described above);
- Title I (as described below);
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners;
- Vocational and technical education programs;
- Gifted and talented programs;
- School nutrition programs; and
- Before and after school programs.

The district recognizes that children and youth in transition suffer from disabilities at a disproportionate rate, yet frequently are not evaluated or provided appropriate special education and related services. To address this problem, evaluations of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary, to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the district shall expeditiously designate a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall then be conducted expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provision of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

When applying any district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child's or youth's living situation shall be excused. Our school district will follow state procedures to ensure that youth in transition and youth who are out of school are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services. School personnel shall refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The liaison will assist the school in making such referrals, as necessary.

School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a form, manner and language understandable to each parent.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student shall also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals and Title I services while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and shall immediately refer the parent or youth to the liaison. The liaison shall ensure the student is enrolled in the school of his or her choice and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and shall resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The liaison shall keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are repeatedly delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition. The parent, unaccompanied youth or school district may appeal the liaison's decision as provided in the state's dispute resolution process.

If a student or parent/guardian disputes the decision to be deemed homeless, then they must complete a Decatur County Dispute form. This form will be given to the student, parent/guardian by T. Williams.

Free meals

Hunger and poor nutrition are obvious barriers to learning. To help ensure that children and youth in transition are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the district nutrition office for immediate processing.

Title I

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend. The trauma and instability of homelessness puts students at sufficient risk of academic regression to warrant additional support. The district shall reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to children and youth in transition attending non-participating schools. The amount reserved shall be determined by a formula based upon the per pupil Title I expenditure and developed jointly by the liaison and the Title I director. Reserved funds will be used to provide educationally related support services to children and youth in transition, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers that prevent regular attendance.

Our district's Title I plan will be coordinated with our McKinney-Vento services, through collaboration between the Title I director and the liaison. Children and youth in transition shall be assessed, reported on and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education regulations and guidance.

Training

The Director of Federal Programs will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for the building homeless liaison (Homeless 101). The liaison will turn around and train the following LEA and school staff at least once each year: the Assistant Superintendent, principals, assistant principals, federal program administrators, registrars, school secretaries,

school counselors, school social workers, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, school nurses and teachers. The training and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to children and youth in transition (Homeless 101).

The liaison shall also obtain from every school the name and contact information of a building liaison. Building liaisons will lead and coordinate their schools' compliance with this policy and will receive training from the district liaison annually.

Coordination

The liaison shall coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, liaisons in neighboring districts and other organizations and agencies. Coordination will include conducting outreach and training to those agencies and participating in the local continuum of care, homeless coalition, homeless steering committee, and other relevant groups. Both public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the liaison and our schools in implementing this policy.

Preschool

Preschool education is a very important element of later academic success. Children in transition have experienced many difficulties accessing preschool opportunities. To facilitate preschool enrollment and attendance, the provisions of this policy will apply to preschools. Our district will ensure that children in transition receive priority enrollment in preschool programs operated by the district, including exempting children in transition from waiting lists.

Children in transition with disabilities will be referred for preschool services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Children in transition under age three will be referred for at-risk services under Part C of IDEA and screened to determine if referrals for additional Part C services are appropriate. The liaison will collaborate with Head Start and Even Start programs and other preschool programs to ensure that children in transition can access those programs.

Decatur County Schools Additional Information

1. Follow up by Social Worker and/or Chip Davis with family by home visit and/or phone call after housing questioners are returned.
2. **Determination by- Chip Davis, Tia Williams, ReCarlos Williams**
3. **If student/family is deemed homeless, Tia Williams will notify you and it will be coded in Infinite Campus by Chip Davis/ Susan Lynn. Data Clerks should not change the coding in Infinite Campus.**

4. School will receive a YELLOW MVP form on every student determined Homeless which should be filed in the perm record.

Please continue to “take care” of your children as you always have. When students have needs, please utilize all school and community resources to meet them. The law requires us to make sure that homeless students have access to appropriate public education. In our system, all schools are Title I so no matter where they attend, the student will receive Title I services. We will continue to work with families on a case by case situation when school of origin is an issue. Transportation and/or agreeable arrangements will be made to ensure that the student has access to an appropriate public education.

Things to ensure that homeless students are provided:

1. Enroll and register even if they do not have appropriate documentation. Referral should be made and family has 30 days to provide. We must assist them in securing these documents.
2. School of Origin
3. Transportation if needed – coordinate with Davis/ Williams
4. Title I Services at the school enrolled – all our students are served
5. School nutrition –Chip Davis/ Susan Lynn will notify Nutrition Department if student is eligible for MVP
6. Priority on waiting lists

MONTHLY HOMELESS REPORT – Building MVP Contact

Form will be due by the last Friday of each month to Tia Williams’

September - May - Each month, report every identified homeless student and check services that have been offered during that calendar month. If you have additional services, add to one of three blank columns or add in comment section. Keep a copy for your documentation crate and email the monthly report to Tia Williams. We will be using these forms to keep an accurate account of identified students.

Monitoring of Student Progress

Each 9 weeks, the Building MVP contact should report attendance and grades for the identified Homeless students at your school. This documentation will be entered on a provided form. Building MVP will email report to Tia Williams at the end of each nine weeks will and keep a copy in the crate. IF there is Questions about school credit or partial coursework received from another system or within Decatur County. Please make contact with your school administrator and they will contact Mr. Davis to make the final decision about awarded credits.

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