

# The School Board of Monroe County Bylaws & Policies

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## **5111.01 - HOMELESS STUDENTS**

For purposes of this policy, pursuant to Federal and State law, homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and include those who meet any of the following criteria:

- A. share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- B. live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- C. live in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. are abandoned in hospitals
- E. 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; or
- F. live in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.

Additionally, pursuant to McKinney-Vento, unaccompanied youth are children and youth whose living arrangement meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless and who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, and, pursuant to State law, are found by the District's Liaison for Homeless Children to be unaccompanied homeless youth eligible for services under Federal law.

Further, pursuant to Federal and State law, children or youth who are experiencing homelessness also include migratory children who are living in circumstances described in A-F above.

It is the policy of the School Board that homeless students are afforded the same free appropriate public education as provided to other students, have access to the educational and other services that they need so that they have the opportunity to meet the same challenging Florida academic achievement standards to which all students are held, and have access to fully participate in the district's extracurricular activities. Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall have access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs administered by the School District. Unaccompanied high school youth will receive counseling to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education.

In addition, the district will provide appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by homeless children and youth while attending a prior school.

Homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The District shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

The District shall remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of homeless students in schools in the District. Homeless students shall be enrolled immediately, even if they missed an application or enrollment deadline, or do not have the necessary enrollment documentation such as immunization and health records, proof of residency or guardianship, birth certificate, school records, uniform/dress code requirements, outstanding balances or absences, and other documentation. The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by any such child or youth to obtain

relevant records normally required for enrollment and shall maintain those records for each homeless child or youth. All records obtained will be treated as a student education record, shall not be deemed to be directory information (under section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act), and must be kept so that they are available in a timely fashion if the child enters a new school or district.

Further, the District will assist, to the extent feasible, the homeless students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school. No Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

The District will keep homeless students in the school of origin, that is, the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or last enrolled, or they will be assigned to the school serving the grade in which the student will be placed in the attendance zone where the child or youth currently resides.

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in the District including:

- A. transportation services;
- B. educational services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or similar State and local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities and gifted students, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;
- C. programs in vocational and technical education;
- D. school nutrition programs; and
- E. before- and after-school programs.

The Board recognizes that homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin and the right to dispute their school assignment, if their assignment is other than their school of origin. When considering placement in a school other than the child or youth's school of origin, the district will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student's best interest. A homeless child or youth may continue their education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and a homeless student who becomes permanently housed during the academic year may remain at their school of origin for the remainder of the academic year and continue to receive all McKinney-Vento Act benefits. The Board requires that these rights and the District's Homeless Enrollment Dispute Process be communicated to the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth.

In determining the best interest of the student, the District shall, keep the student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the homeless student's parent/guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth. If the student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian, a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, will be provided to the homeless student's parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth in a manner or form understandable. Each school in the District shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

At the request of the parent/guardian, unaccompanied youth, or the local Homeless Liaison, transportation shall be provided for a homeless student to and from the school of origin as follows:

- A. If the homeless student continues to live in the School District in which the school of origin is located, transportation will be provided.
- B. If the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his/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. If the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

The Superintendent will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as required by law, as well as additional duties that may be assigned by the Superintendent. Such duties include, but are not limited to, providing written certification documenting that an individual meets the definition set forth in State and Federal law of "unaccompanied homeless youth". The written certification shall be issued on official District letterhead stationery of the Homeless Liaison and shall include the date of the finding, a citation to F.S. 743.067(2), 42 U.S.C. 11434a, and be signed by the Homeless Liaison.

Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate district programs and collaborate with outside agencies including local social services and community organizations, other school districts regarding homeless services, housing authorities, and ESE.

F.S. 743.067  
42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.

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