

**Instruction  
Education For Homeless Children****Definitions**

Homeless students means students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes: (42 USC 11434a)

1. Students who are sharing the 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~~
2. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
3. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
4. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in conditions described in (1)-(3) above
5. Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

School of origin means the school that the homeless student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a preschool. If the school the homeless student attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the student was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that the student attended within the preceding 15 months and with which the student is connected, the district liaison shall determine, in consultation with and with the agreement of the homeless student and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student, and in the best interests of the homeless student, which school shall be deemed the school of origin. (42 USC 11432)

Best interest means that, in making educational and school placement decisions for a homeless student, consideration is given to, among other factors, educational stability, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress, and the student's access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all district students.

**District Liaison**

The Superintendent designates the following staff person as the district liaison for homeless students: (42 USC 11432)

**Rachel Valenzuela**  
**Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services**  
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The district's liaison for homeless students shall: (42 USC 11432)

1. Ensure that homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordinated activities with other entities and agencies

2. Ensure that homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, district schools
3. Ensure that Homeless families and children and youth have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start and Early Head Start programs, early intervention services under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other preschool programs prescribed by the District.
4. Ensure that homeless families and students receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
5. Inform Parents/guardians of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are ensure that they are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children
6. Disseminate notice of the educational rights of homeless students in locations frequented by parents/guardians of homeless children and youth and by unaccompanied youth including schools, family shelters, public libraries, and hunger relief agencies (soup kitchens). The rights shall be presented in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardians of homeless students and unaccompanied youth.
7. Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with law, and the section "Resolving Enrollment Disputes" below.
8. Fully inform parents/guardians of homeless students and unaccompanied youth of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and assist them in accessing transportation to the school of choice
9. Ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless students receive professional development and other support
10. Ensure that unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards established for other students, and are informed of their status as independent students under 20 USC 1087vv and that they may receive assistance from the district liaison to receive verification of their independent student status for purposes of applying for federal student aid pursuant to 20 USC 1090
11. Coordinate and collaborate with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless students, including the provision of comprehensive data to the state coordinator as required by law.

In addition, when notified pursuant to Education Code [48918.1](#), the district liaison shall assist, facilitate, or represent a homeless student who is undergoing a disciplinary proceeding that could result in his/her expulsion. When notified pursuant to Education Code [48915.5](#), the district liaison shall participate in an individualized education program team meeting to make a manifestation determination regarding the behavior of a student with a disability.

The Superintendent or designee shall inform homeless children and youth, their parents/guardians, school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the district's liaison. He/she shall also provide the name and contact information of the district's liaison to the California Department of Education (CDE) for publishing on the CDE's web site. (42 USC [11432](#))

**Enrollment**

The district shall make placement decisions for homeless students based on the student's best interest.

In determining the best interest of the student, the district shall consider student-centered factors related to the student's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety, giving priority to the request of the student's parent/guardian or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth. (42 USC [11432](#))

Such factors may include, but are not limited to, the age of the student, the distance of the commute and the impact it may have on the student's education, personal safety issues, the student's need for special instruction, the length of anticipated stay in the temporary shelter or other temporary location, likely area of future housing, school placement of siblings, and the time remaining in the school year.

However, placement decisions shall not be based on whether a homeless student lives with the homeless parent/guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions, give priority to the views of the students, and provide notice to the student of their appeal rights.

In determining a student's best interest, a homeless student shall, to the extent feasible, be placed in their school of origin, unless his/her parent/guardian requests otherwise.

Once a placement decision has been made, the principal or designee shall immediately enroll the student in the school of choice. The student shall be enrolled even if he/she:

1. Has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks, or other items or monies due to the school last attended
2. Does not have clothing normally required by the school, such as school uniforms
3. Is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, proof of residency, and records of immunization and other required health records
4. Has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness

The principal or designee shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain the relevant records. If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other required health records, the principal or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the district liaison for homeless students. The district liaison shall assist the parent/guardian, or the student if he/she is an unaccompanied youth, in obtaining the necessary immunizations, screenings, or records for the student. (42 USC 11432)

If the student is placed at a school other than his/her school of origin or the school requested by his/her parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth, the Superintendent or designee shall provide the parent/guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision along with a statement regarding the right to appeal the placement decision. (42 USC 11432)

The student may continue attending his/her school of origin for the duration of the homelessness. (Education Code 48852.7; 42 USC 11432)

To ensure that the homeless student has the benefit of matriculating with his/her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns, the following shall apply: (Education Code 48852.7; 42 USC 11432)

1. Through the duration of the school year if the student is in grades K-8
2. Through graduation if the student is in high school

### **Resolving Enrollment Disputes**

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a particular school, the matter shall be referred to the district liaison, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible. (42 USC [11432](#))

The parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of any decisions related to eligibility, school selection, or enrollment and of the right of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions. (42 USC [11432](#))

The written explanation shall include:

1. A description of the action proposed or refused by the district
2. An explanation of why the action is proposed or refused
3. A description of any other options the district considered and the reasons that any other options were rejected
4. A description of any other factors relevant to the district's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination including the facts, witnesses, and evidence relied upon and their sources
5. Appropriate timelines to ensure any relevant deadlines are not missed
6. Contact information for the district liaison and state coordinator, and a brief description of their roles

The written explanation shall be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in language that the parent/guardian or student can understand.

The district liaison may use an informal process as an alternative to formal dispute resolution procedures, provided that the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth have access to the more formal process if informal resolution is not successful in resolving the matter.

In working with a student's parents/guardians or unaccompanied youth to resolve an enrollment dispute, the district liaison shall:

1. Inform them that they may provide written and/or oral documentation to support their position
2. Inform them that they may seek the assistance of social services, advocates, and/or service providers in having the dispute resolved.
3. Provide them a simple form that they may use and turn in to the school to initiate the dispute resolution process.
4. Provide them a copy of the dispute form they submit for their records

5. Provide them the outcome of the dispute for their records.

If a parent/guardian disagrees with the liaison's enrollment decision, he/she may appeal the decision to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall make a determination within five working days.

If the parent/guardian chooses to appeal the district's placement decision, the district liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the homeless liaison at the Sonoma County Office of Education.

Pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought and shall be allowed to attend classes and participate fully in school activities. (42 USC [11432](#), [11434a](#))

### **Transportation**

The district shall provide transportation for a homeless student to and from their school of origin when the student is residing within the district and the parent/guardian requests that such transportation be provided. If the student moves outside of district boundaries, but continues to attend his/her school of origin within this district, the Superintendent or designee shall consult with the superintendent of the district in which the student is now residing to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.

The district shall not be obligated to provide transportation to students who continue attending their school of origin after they cease to be homeless, unless the formerly homeless student has an individualized education program that includes transportation as a necessary related service for the student. (Education Code [48852.7](#))

### **Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities**

A homeless student who enrolls in any district school shall be immediately deemed to meet all residency requirements for participation in interscholastic sports or other extracurricular activities.

### **Notification and Complaints**

Information regarding the educational rights of homeless students, as specified in Education Code [51225.1](#) and [51225.2](#), shall be included in the annual uniform complaint procedures notification distributed to students, parents/guardians, employees, and other interested parties pursuant to 5 CCR [4622](#). (Education Code [51225.1](#), [51225.2](#))

Any complaint that the district has not complied with requirements regarding the education of homeless students, as specified in Education Code [51225.1](#) or [51225.2](#), may be filed in accordance with the district's procedures in AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures.

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