

Sylvan Heights Science Charter School

Policy Title: Homeless Students

Policy Number: 251

Adopted: February 2, 2016

Revised: February 24, 2020

AUTHORITY

Sylvan Heights Science Charter School (the School), and its Board, recognize the right of all enrolled students, including those who are homeless, to have the opportunity to participate in the School's educational programs. The School shall make reasonable efforts to promptly identify homeless students enrolled in the School, recognize their right to remain enrolled, and eliminate existing barriers to their ongoing enrollment, attendance, and education, in compliance with federal and state law and regulations.

The Board shall ensure that homeless students have equal access to the same educational programs and services provided to other students.

The Board, authorizes the Principal/Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or designee to waive School policies, procedures, and administrative regulations that create barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability and success in school of homeless students.

It is the policy of the Board that no student shall be discriminated against, segregated or stigmatized based on his/her homeless status.

DEFINITIONS

Enroll or **Enrollment** means attending classes and participating fully in School activities.

Homeless students are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes:

1. Students who are:
 - a. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - b. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - c. Living in emergency, transitional, or domestic violence shelters; or
 - d. Abandoned in hospitals;

2. Students 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;
3. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and
4. Migratory students who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

School of origin is the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including preschool. When the student completes the final grade level served by the school or origin, the school of origin shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Board designates the Principal/Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or designee to serve as the School's liaison for homeless students.

The School's liaison shall ensure outreach and coordination with:

1. Local service agencies and other entities that provide services to homeless students and families.
2. Other school districts on issues of prompt identification, transfer of records, and transportation.
3. School staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Act.
4. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

The Principal/CAO or designee shall provide reliable, valid, and comprehensive data to the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

GUIDELINES

Enrollment/Placement

Best Interest Determination –

In determining the best interest of a student, the School shall:

1. Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent/guardian.

2. Consider student-centered factors related to impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety, giving priority to the request of the parent/guardian.
3. If, after such consideration, the School determines that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian, the School shall provide the parent/guardian with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardian and shall include information regarding the right to appeal.

Placement –

In accordance with the student's best interest, the School shall continue to enroll a homeless student in his/her school of origin while s/he remains homeless and through the end of the academic year in which s/he obtains permanent housing.

Parents/Guardians of a homeless student may request enrollment in the School in the attendance area where the student is actually living or other schools.

The School shall provide the parent/guardian with a written explanation of any School decision related to School selection or placement, including the right to appeal.

Enrollment –

The School shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if:

1. The student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.
2. The application or enrollment deadline has passed during any period of homelessness.

The School's liaison shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academics or other records.

The School may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information.

Assignment –

If the School is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the School shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's assignment within the School.

Dispute Resolution –

If a dispute arises over eligibility or enrollment:

1. The parent/guardian shall be referred to the School's liaison, who shall assist in the dispute resolution process.
2. The student shall be immediately enrolled in the School, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.
3. The School's liaison shall issue a written decision of the dispute within twenty (20) business days of being notified of the dispute.

A parent/guardian may appeal the School's written decision or file a complaint with the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program.

Education Records

Information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Comparable Services

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other students including, but not limited to:

1. Transportation services.
2. School nutrition programs.
3. Educational programs for which the homeless student meets the eligibility criteria, such as:
 - a. Service provided under Title I or similar state or local programs.
 - b. Programs for English Learners.
 - c. Programs for students with disabilities.
 - d. Programs for gifted and talented students.

Transportation

The School shall provide transportation for homeless students to the School if they so choose to attend.

If the homeless student lives in another district but will attend the School as his/her school of origin, the School and district shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.

Training

The School's liaison shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program.

The School's liaison shall arrange professional development programs for School staff, including office staff.

School personnel providing services to homeless students, including School enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support to:

1. Improve identification of homeless students;
2. Understand the rights of such students, including requirements for immediate enrollment and transportation; and
3. Heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to, the educational needs of such students

References

20 U.S.C. 1232g

20 U.S.C. Sec. 6301 et seq.

42 U.S.C. Sec. 11431 et seq.

24 P.S. Sec. 1306

34 CFR Part 99

34 CFR 200.30

34 CFR 299.19

22 PA Code Sec. 11.18

22 PA Code Sec. 403.1

67 Fed. Reg. 10698

PA Education for Homeless Children and Youth State Plan

Board policies: 103.1, 113, 113.4, 114, 115, 138, 146, 200, 201, 203, 204, 206, 209, 216, 808, 810, 918