



STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS POLICY (POLICY #222)

Last Updated: 9/13/2017

PURPOSE

The Board of Directors (“Board”) of Freire Charter School (“School”) recognizes its obligation to ensure that homeless students have access to the same educational programs and services provided to other students. The Board shall make reasonable efforts to identify children experiencing homelessness, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education, in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and other federal and state law regulations.

The Board may waive policies, procedures and administrative regulations that create barriers for enrollment, attendance, transportation, and success in charter schools of homeless students, based on the recommendation of a Head of School.

DEFINITIONS

HOMELESS STUDENTS

Homeless students are defined as individuals lacking a fixed, regular, and night-time residence, which include the following conditions:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency, transitional, or domestic violence shelters.
- Abandoned in hospitals.
- Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations, or similar settings.
- Living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples.
- Living as run-away children.
- Abandoned or forced out of homes by parents or caretakers.
- Living as school age unwed mothers in houses for unwed mothers if they have no other living accommodations.

MIGRATORY CHILDREN

The term “migratory children” means children who are, or whose parent or spouse are, migratory agricultural workers, including migratory dairy workers, or migratory fishermen, and who have moved from one school district to another in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work.

STUDENT AND FAMILY RIGHTS

Under McKinney-Vento, eligible students have the right to the following:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education

- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents
- Enroll in a local school or continue attending the School (school of origin), if that is your preference and is feasible
- If it is determined that the school selected is not in the student's best interest, the Charter School will provide a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal the Charter School's decision
- Receive transportation to and from the Charter School, if requested
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to your needs as a student

SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Board designates the Head of School or his/her designee to serve as the Charter School's Liaison for homeless students and families.

THE SCHOOL'S LIAISON SHALL COORDINATE WITH:

- Local service agencies that provide services to homeless children, youth and families.
- School districts on issues of records transfer, per pupil allocation, transportation and special education programs to ensure that homeless children who are in need of special education and related services are located, identified, and evaluated.
- State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

THE SCHOOL LIAISON HAS THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Identify homeless children and youth;
- Inform parents or guardians of educational rights and related opportunities available to their children, and provide them with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where children and youth receive services under the Act and forms to such places as schools, family shelters, and food pantries;
- Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with the Enrollment Dispute section and ensure immediate enrollment pending resolution of disputes;
- Inform the parent/guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, of all transportation options, including to the school of origin, and assist in accessing these transportation services;
- Assist children and youth who do not have immunizations or immunization or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations or immunization or medical records;
- Understand the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidance issued for the education of homeless students in order to distribute information on the subject as well as to present workshops for school personnel, including office staff.

BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION

The School ensures that the best interests of students and families experiencing homelessness are in mind. This means that homeless students shall remain at the School (school of origin), unless it is determined that it is not in his/her best interest. If remaining at the School is not in his/her best interest, the necessary transfer of school records shall be carried out by the School to ensure the student's immediate enrollment in a new school.