

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ENSURING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS
FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS

Guiding Principle

Rhode Island School for the Deaf recognizes its obligation to students who find themselves in a situation where homelessness is an unfortunate reality.

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires all school districts to ensure access to public education for children and youth experiencing homelessness and to ensure their success in school once enrolled. Under this Act, students experiencing homelessness have certain educational rights, including the right to:

- Immediately enroll in school, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment
- Enroll and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- Continue attending their school of origin (if requested and is feasible), or enroll in the local school;
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested;
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students.

The McKinney-Vento Act ensures the educational rights and protections of students who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes students who are:

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Sharing the housing of other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- Living in motels, hotels or camping grounds due to the lack of an alternative adequate accommodation;
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Living in other public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings

Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless, if they meet the above definition.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to ensure compliance with federal Law and to the extent practical and as required by law, the School will work with homeless students and their families to provide them with equal access to the same free, appropriate education (including public preschool education) provided to other students.

Special attention will be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, School for the Deaf will take reasonable steps to ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated at school on the basis of their homeless status.

The School will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Homeless students will be provided school services for which they are eligible, including English Language Learner services, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, transition services, school nutrition programs and involvement in after school activities.

Guidelines

The Director shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the School's liaison for homeless students and their families. The School's liaison for homeless students and their families shall

- Coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; collaborate with the student's sending school districts on issues of transportation and information sharing; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.
- Ensure that homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals are made to other appropriate services.
- Inform the parents or guardians of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the child/youth.
- Provide public notice of the educational rights of homeless students available in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens.

The School's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to school policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment and progress of homeless students.

To the full extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in this school while they remain homeless.

If the student's attendance is directly affected by homelessness, the School will consolidate partial credits, unresolved, or incomplete coursework and will provide students experiencing homelessness with various opportunities to accrue credit in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student toward eventual graduation.

To respect the privacy of the student(s) and the family, the student's homeless status shall not be discussed with those who do not have a 'need to know' in order to perform their professional responsibilities in service to the student.

References

The McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, Part A, as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)

R.I. State Regulations for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth

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