

PROGRAMS FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

The Pattonville R-III Board of Education recognizes that homelessness alone should not be sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. Therefore, the district, in accordance with state and federal law and the Missouri State Plan, Meeting the Needs of Missouri's Homeless Children and Youth, will give special attention to ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth in the District shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths.

Homeless children and youths are those identified as such by the McKinney-Vento Homeless assistance Act, as amended.

Enrollment/Placement

If a child identified as homeless requests admission to the school district, the district will consider the best interest of the child with parental involvement in determining whether the child should be enrolled in the district or, if applicable, transported back to the school of origin. In determining the best interest of the homeless child or youth, the District shall, to the extent feasible, keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian.

Enrollment requirements which may constitute a barrier to the education of a homeless child or youth may be waived at the discretion of the superintendent if allowed by law. If the district is unable to determine the grade level of the student because of missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize other reasonable means to determine the appropriate grade level for the child.

Services

Each homeless child or youth enrolled in the District shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the district including, but not limited to, transportation services; educational services for which the child meets the eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged, disabled, and gifted and talented students, vocational programs, and school nutrition programs; before- and after-school care programs; and programs for students with limited English proficiency

When it is in the best interest of the homeless child or youth living in the Pattonville R-III School District to attend a school in the district of origin that is outside of Pattonville R-III School District, the school district of origin and Pattonville R-III School District shall agree upon a

method to apportion the responsibility and cost for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the school districts cannot agree on a method, the cost for transportation shall be shared equally.

When a Pattonville resident student becomes homeless but continues to live within the boundaries of the District, Pattonville shall provide or arrange for transportation of the student to and from the school of origin. This may be achieved through the District's transportation services or an outside agency.

Records

Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs of each homeless child or youth shall be maintained so that appropriate services may be given the student, so that necessary referrals can be made, and so that records may be transferred in a timely fashion when a homeless child or youth enters a new school district. Copies of records shall be made available upon request to students or parents in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Coordinator

The Board will designate an individual to act as the district's homeless coordinator for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended. The homeless coordinator will ensure, among other things, that:

- (i) homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- (ii) homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, Pattonville schools;
- (iii) homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths [they] are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by Pattonville, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.
- (iv) the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- (v) public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services, such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens;
- (vi) enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with applicable law; and
- (vii) the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected.

The district shall inform school personnel, service providers and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the district homeless coordinator.

Resolving Grievances

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment:

- (i) the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute;
- (ii) the parent or guardian of the child or youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision as set forth below;
- (iii) the child, youth, parent or guardian shall be referred to the District's homeless coordinator who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as described below as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
- (iv) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless coordinator shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

Level I - A complaint regarding the placement or education of a homeless child or youth shall first be presented orally and informally to the district's homeless coordinator. If the complaint is not promptly resolved, the complainant may present a formal written complaint (grievance) to the homeless coordinator. The written charge must include the following information: date of filing, description of alleged grievances, the name of the person or persons involved and a recap of the action taken during the informal charge stage. Within five (5) working days after receiving the complaint, the coordinator shall state a decision in writing to the complainant, with supporting evidence and reasons. In addition, the coordinator will inform the superintendent of the formal complaint and the disposition.

Level II - The complainant may appeal the Level I decision to the superintendent by filing a written appeals package. This package shall consist of the complainant's grievance and the decisions rendered at Level I. The superintendent will arrange for a personal conference with the complainant at their earliest mutual convenience. Within five (5) working days after receiving the complaint, the superintendent shall state a decision in writing to the complainant, with supporting evidence and reasons.

Level III - If resolution is not reached in Level II, a similar written appeals package shall be directed through the superintendent to the Board of Education requesting a hearing before the Board at the next regularly scheduled or specially called meeting. The hearing before the Board may be conducted in closed session upon the request of either the Board or the complainant. Within thirty (30) working days after receiving the appeals package, the Board shall state its decision and reply in writing to the parties involved. For district purposes, the decision of the Board of Education is final.

Level IV - If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action taken by the Pattonville R-III School District, a written notice stating the reasons for dissatisfaction may be filed with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Complaints made under this process must be signed by the complainant and include (i) a description of the complaint, (ii) the name(s) and age(s) of the children involved, (iii) the name(s) of involved school District personnel and the District(s) they represent, and (iv) a description of attempts that were made to solve the issue at the local level. The complaint under Level IV should be addressed to State Homeless Coordinator, Federal Discretionary Grants, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480.

The Director of Federal Discretionary Grants will inform the District of the complaint. The director or designee will gather needed information from statements of the parties involved and may conduct an independent investigation through an on-site visit if necessary. Within thirty (30) days after receiving the complaint, the Director of Federal Discretionary Grants will resolve the complaint and will inform interested parties, in writing, of the decision.

Level V - If the complainant disagrees with the decision of the Deputy Commissioner of Education in a matter concerning a homeless child or youth, the complainant may request review of the decision by the United States Secretary of Education in accordance with 34 C.F.R. Part 299.11.

Adopted: January 28, 2003

Revised: March 18, 2003

Cross Refs.:EEA, Student Transportation Services
IGBC, Programs for Disadvantaged Students
JECA, Admission of Resident Students
JECB, Admission of Nonresident Students
JECC, Assignment of Students to Grade Levels/Classes
JHCB, Inoculations of Students
JO, Student Records

Legal Refs.:Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431
et seq.)
P.L.93-380, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974