



Evergreen Community Charter School

Section: 200 Pupils
Title: Homeless Students
Number: 251
Last Revised: September 1, 2022

Authority

The Board of Directors (Board) of Evergreen Community Charter School (CS) recognizes its obligation to ensure that homeless students have access to the same educational programs and services provided to other students at Evergreen Community CS. The Board shall make reasonable efforts to identify homeless children, encourage 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 shall ensure that homeless children and youths have equal access to the same educational programs and services provided to other Evergreen students.

The Board may waive policies, procedures and administrative regulations that create barriers for enrollment, attendance and success in school of homeless students, based on the recommendation of the school's Director. No student shall be discriminated against, segregated or stigmatized based on their homeless status.

Definitions

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

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
3. Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters.
4. Abandoned in hospitals.
5. Awaiting foster care placement.
6. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
7. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings.
8. Livings as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples.
9. Living as runaway children.
10. Abandoned or forced out of homes by parents or caretakers.
11. Living as school age unwed mothers in houses for unwed mothers if they have no other living accommodations.

Migratory Children means children who are, or whose parents 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, in

order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work.

School of origin is defined as the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

Unaccompanied youth means a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth who have run away from home; been abandoned or forced out of home by a parent, guardian or other caretaker; or separated from a parent or guardian for any other reason.

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 Charter School (school of origin), if that is your preference and is feasible
- If it so 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

Delegation of Responsibility

The Board designates the School Nurse or her designee to serve as Evergreen's Liaison for homeless students and families.

Evergreen's liaison shall coordinate with:

1. Local service agencies that provide services to homeless children, youth and families.
2. Sending school districts on issues of prompt identification, transfer of records, transportation and other services or programs.
3. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.
4. Staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Evergreen's liaison has the following responsibilities:

1. Identify homeless children and youth;
2. 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;
3. 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 school, family shelters, and food pantries;
4. Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with the Enrollment Dispute section and ensure immediate enrollment pending resolution of disputes;
5. 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;
6. Assist children and youth who do not have immunization(s) or medical records to obtain necessary immunization(s) or medical records;
7. Understand the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidance issues 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.

8. Shall provide reliable, valid and comprehensive data to the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.
9. Shall recommend and arrange professional development programs for staff consistent with this policy.

Best Interest Determination

The Charter School ensures that the best interests of students and families experiencing homelessness are in mind. This means that homeless students shall remain at the Charter School (school of origin), unless it is determined that it is not in his/her best interest. If remaining at the Charter School is not in his/her best interest or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, Evergreen shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth and shall include information regarding the right to appeal.

Placement

In accordance with the child's or youth's best interest, Evergreen 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.

Evergreen's liaison shall assist an unaccompanied youth in placement or enrollment decisions, giving priority to the views of the student in determining where s/he will be enrolled. Evergreen Community CS shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of any decision related to school selection or placement, including the right to appeal.

Enrollment

Evergreen Community CS 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 homeless

The liaison shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academics or other records.

Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises over eligibility or enrollment:

1. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the 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 liaison shall issue a written decision of the dispute within twenty (20) business days of being notified of the dispute.

A parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth may appeal a written decision or file a complaint with the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.

Education Records

Information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

(FERPA) and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Comparable Services

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

1. Transportation services
2. Meals
3. Career education
4. Educational programs for which the homeless student meets the eligibility criteria, such as:
 - a. Programs for students with disabilities
 - b. Programs for gifted and talented students
 - c. Programs for English Language Learners

Transportation

Evergreen Community CS's sending districts shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend.

Training

The liaison shall participate in professional development programs relating to McKinney–Vento Assistance Act, and the National Center for Homeless Education.

School personnel providing services to homeless children and youths shall receive professional development and support to:

1. Improve identification of homeless children, youths, and unaccompanied youths,
2. Understand the rights of such children, including requirements for immediate enrollment and transportation, and
3. Heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to the education needs of such children.