

HENRY COUNTY SCHOOLS

HOMELESS

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

EDUCATION

PROGRAM

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Revised July, 2017

HENRY COUNTY SCHOOLS HOMELESS PLAN/PROCEDURES AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

The Henry County School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of the Homeless Education program. The school/district shall notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources.

The Henry County School System shall conduct an annual evaluation (**Appendix F**) of its Homeless Education program to determine the effectiveness of the program. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement.

Definitions:

For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Henry County School System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines *homeless children and youth* (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

****Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:**

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals; or
- Awaiting foster care placement.

****Children and youth 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.**

****Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.**

****Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.**

The term *unaccompanied youth* includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the

streets, or in other inadequate housing and children, youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as “throwaway” children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available.

The *school of origin* is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN

Purpose of the Program

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. The program will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academic and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non-homeless students.

The program provides procedural guidelines **to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrollment. Homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, will be enrolled immediately pending obtainment of the necessary documents.** The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining the proper documentation.

The homeless education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the *school of origin* and providing them with transportation to and from the school of origin. Provisions are made for parents/guardians, or unaccompanied youth to request or decline enrollment in the *school of origin*.

The program provides for a homeless liaison that will ensure program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, are provided the opportunity for academic success.

Identification & Registration Procedures

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The district will conduct awareness training sessions with the appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without using stigmatizing terminology. The district will use a *Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A)* to facilitate identity of homeless children and youth and preschoolers. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will complete the *Residency Questionnaire* at the time of registration. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the *Residency Questionnaire* must be submitted to the Henry County Schools Homeless Liaison on the day of registration for students identified as homeless. The school will

maintain the original form in the file separate from the student's permanent record for audit purposes during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor's office. Currently enrolled students who may become homeless may be identified through school personnel observation as well as through referrals from outside sources.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth with or without (**Appendix B**) proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record, or school records. The school counselor or principal's designee will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the necessary records and documents for enrollment. Enrollment without the required immunization record will be pending receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation. The existing method of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll himself or herself. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the Henry County Schools Homeless Liaison to report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in a language that the student understands. The Henry County Schools Homeless Liaison (**Appendix E**) and school personnel will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services.

Meal Status

The application process for free and reduced priced meals can be expedited for homeless children and youth. The determination for free meals may be made without completing the full application process (source: U. S. Department of Agriculture: http://www.nlchp.org/FA_Education/new_usda_memo.pdf).

Identification of Homeless Preschoolers

The Henry County Schools Homeless Liaison will collaborate with local community service agencies (e.g. Head Start, Department of Human Resources, Health Department, faith-based organizations and the court system, etc.) and school personnel to identify homeless preschoolers. The district will also include homeless preschoolers and homeless children in the "Child Find" process as required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act. **Appendix H** is posted at all schools, the Central Office, and other appropriate sites.

School Placement

The school system will make school placement decisions in the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth. Students will be given the opportunity to continue in the *school of origin* for the duration of the homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. Students may enroll in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

Resources

The school system, through each school, provides helpful information (**Appendix G**) to parents of homeless children. This information is provided to all parents of children who meet the criteria of homeless children based on their responses on the *Residency Questionnaire* at enrollment as well as those who may be identified after they are enrolled. The information provided may include but is not limited to:

- referrals of homeless children and youth for medical, dental, mental health, and other support services.
- students service programs related to violence prevention and behavioral counseling.
- programs addressing the unique needs for homeless children and youth that may arise from domestic violence.
- providing transportation costs associated with keeping students in the *school of origin*.
- paying fees and costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records needed for enrollment of homeless children and youth in school.
- providing school supplies for homeless children.
- providing extraordinary or emergency services to homeless children and youth to enroll and retain such students in school.
- ensuring that homeless children and youth are not stigmatized and/or alienated due to their homeless status.
- collaborating with other agencies to provide and/or improve services for homeless children and youth.

Dispute Resolution

If school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth's parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a School Enrollment Dispute (**Appendix C**) with the school in which the student is presently enrolled. The principal of this school will notify the Henry County Schools Homeless Liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The Henry County Schools Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute (**Appendix D**). If the dispute cannot be settled by the homeless liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from the SDE liaison or other appropriate service agency.

Appendices A – N

- A. Residency Questionnaire
- B. Procedure for Admitting Homeless Students
- C. School Enrollment Dispute Form
- D. District Enrollment Dispute Form
- E. Homeless Liaison Responsibilities
- F. Program Evaluation Form
- G. Notice of Educational Services
- H. Education Rights of Homeless Children & Youth
- I. Needs Assessment Form
- J. Roster of Identified Students
- K. School Compliance Checklist
- L. BOE Approval
- M. Enrollment Procedure
- N. Frequently Asked Questions