

GADSDEN CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION
McKINNEY VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT
POLICY AND PROCEDURES
FOR IMPLEMENTATION

SCHOOL BOARD POLICY, IIDD, ADOPTED JULY 10, 1990

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2011-2012

REVISED JULY, 2011

Policy

EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The Gadsden City Board of Education shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. (Section 721 Statement of Policy)

Assurance Statement

It is the policy of the Gadsden City of Education that no student will be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity on the basis of sex, religion, belief, national origin, ethic group, or handicapping condition. (Student Code of Conduct Handbook)

In order for effective teaching and learning to take place in our schools, there must be a cooperative relationship among students, parents, guardians, and educators. (Students Code of Conduct Handbook)

In keeping with its desire to provide the best possible education for all students, the Board shall provide education programs for the students of disparate ability, background, and achievement. (School Board Policy, IIDD, adopted July 10, 1990)

The homeless student is guaranteed the same equal educational opportunity as other students in our school system.

The Law concerning Homeless students

***The McKinney-Vento Homeless Act was signed into law on July 22, 1987.** It was enacted to address the immediate crisis of homelessness and the many needs of the homeless. Services available through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act include housing, primary health care, mental health care, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, education and job training. Education requirements of the Act include:

- Homeless children are assured a free, appropriate public education either in their school of origin or in a school in the attendance area in which they are actually living, whichever is in the child's best interest;
- All homeless children must receive educational services which are comparable to those offered other children. They cannot be separated from other students on the basis of homelessness alone;
- Local school system must provide activities and services for homeless children and youth which will enable them to enroll, attend, and achieve success in school;
- Programs must be developed for school personnel to heighten their awareness of specific educational needs of homeless children and youth;
- Educational systems must ensure that homeless children and youth are able to participate in before- and after-school programs;

- Educational systems must revise policies which enact barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth and must address problems caused by transportation issues, immunization requirements, residency requirements, and lack of birth certificate or other documents;
- Local educational systems have responsibility for maintenance of school records of homeless children and youth and for timely transfer of records to new schools when homeless students relocate; and
- All eligible homeless children are eligible to participate in federal, state, and local food programs

(*Quoted from AN EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL ON HOMELESS CHILDREN, prepared by The Alabama Coalition Against Violence, Bulletin 1993-55)

Policy

EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, Subtitle VII-B, reauthorized January 2002. Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) is amended to read as follows:

SEC. 721. STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. The Gadsden City Board of Education shall ensure that each child of homeless individuals and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including preschool education, as provided to other children and youth.
2. In any State that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the State's compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youth, the State will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that homeless children and youth are afforded that same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youth.
3. Homelessness alone is not sufficient reason to separate children from the mainstream environment.
4. Homeless children and youth should have access to the education and other services that such children and youth need to ensure that such children and youth have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic achievement standards to which all children are held.

Procedures

For Implementation of the Homeless Program

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM: To assist educators and appropriate supportive staff in developing an awareness and sensitivity to the needs of homeless children and youth and to address the special needs of homeless students as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act (pre-school to high school) in the Gadsden City School district.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Principals, teachers, school counselors, school nurses, and other appropriate staff member.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS: The McKinney-Vento Homeless Act defines homelessness as the lack of "fixed, regular, or adequate residence." This definition includes: individuals who are living in shelters and those living in a temporary doubled-up family situation. (Excluding foster children)

OVERVIEW OF THE HOMELESS PROGRAM:

- The homeless program provides additional professional counseling for children and families that need specialized counseling.
- Computers are provided in each shelter through the school system to assist children with homework assignments and increase their computer literacy knowledge. Title I technical personnel provide training and maintain all computers located in the shelters.
- The entire time a family is living in a shelter the **Homeless Liaison** will encourage parental participation with the child's emotional well being as well as class assignments and homework.
- The Title I Parent Center provides additional educational materials to assist the child having difficulty mastering skills. Parents are encouraged to check out videos designed to help with parenting skills and assist with conflicts.
- All homeless children and youth residing in the city limits are automatically provided services under Title I, Part A whether or not they live in a Title I school attendance area.
- The Even Start program provides educational services such as parenting skills, GED preparation, computer training, job readiness, and pre-school educational programs.
- Homeless students receive medical services from the school nurse and referrals are made to local agencies such as mental health, health department, local medical, dental, and vision clinics.
- The Gadsden City Board of Education's brochure is designed to reach out to parents of homeless children and youth to inform them of their rights related to education of their children.
- The **Homeless Liaison** communicates with the shelter director of each shelter, while providing information to the homeless families concerning the school system's parent support services, local school functions, and community services.
- The central office Director of Homeless Program, secretary, and bookkeeper handle all purchases.

SCHOOL ENROLLEMENT

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Admissions of students to the schools of the Gadsden School District shall be on an individual basis, upon application of the parent or guardian of the student, to the Board at the beginning of each school year, under such rules and regulations as the Board may prescribe.

Enrollment of homeless, migrant, immigrant, and limited English proficient children shall not be denied due to any barriers: birth certificate, school records, transcripts, immunization, proof of residency, transportation, unaccompanied: no guardian.

No student may be excluded from any school within the school district except by due process or failure to meet specific of policies contained herein. The Board fully recognizes that providing equality of educational opportunities for all children requires such objectivity. The Board is equally concerned that all admissions policies adhere strictly to applicable legal requirements, e.g., health-related standards.

No child shall be admitted to the first grade until he or his parents do the following:

1. Present to school officials an official birth certificate showing that he is six years old on or before September 1 of the year of his admission.
2. Present to school officials proof that the child has received immunization for the following communicable diseases: polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles and rubella, and mumps; or, present to school officials a written objection to immunization against non-epidemic diseases based on religious grounds, or a statement from a physician stating that the immunization would be detrimental to the child.
3. Present the child's social security card to school officials.

Students Over Twenty-One

If a person is twenty-one years of age on or before September 1 of a particular year, he shall not be admitted to a Gadsden City School without the approval of both the principal of the school and the Superintendent of Education.

In no cases shall admissions policies reflect overt or inadvertent discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, religion, or national origin.

It is the policy of the Gadsden City School System to provide, on a nondiscriminatory basis, educational opportunities for children. No person shall be denied the benefits of any educational program or activity on the basis of race, color, disability, creed, national origin, age, or sex.

PROGRAM PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN LIVING IN SHELTERS OR DOUBLED-UP OCCUPANCY:

- The director of each shelter notifies the **Homeless Liaison** when children and youth arrive.
- The **Homeless Liaison** provides the necessary clothing, hygiene/grooming supplies and school supplies for children and youth living at shelters, making the child's school transition as easy as possible.
- The local educational agency (LEA) serving the homeless child and youth will continue to educate the child or youth in the school of origin, for the duration of homelessness. (Section 722 (g) (3) (A) (i).)
- The LEA shall to the extent feasible, keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian; provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal under subparagraph (E), to the homeless child's or youth's parent or guardian, if the LEA sends such child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian. (Section 722 (g) (3) (B) (I,ii,))
- In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the LEA **Homeless Liaison** will assist in placement enrollment decisions, considers the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal the enrollment or placement in a school. (Section 722 (g) (3) (B) (iii))
- The school and/or the LEA can require the parent or guardian of the homeless child to submit contact information. (Section 722 (g) (3) (H))
- A homeless family is not required to submit immunization forms, residency requirements, and birth certificates or other documents on the initial day of enrollment. (Section 722 (g) (3) (C) (i))
- The homeless child is enrolled in school using the guidelines set by the local board of education. Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs regarding each homeless child or youth shall be maintained for availability for the purpose of transferring children to a new school or school district according to section 444 on the General Education Provisions Act (20 U>S>C> 1232 g). Children are placed into the age appropriate grade until records have been obtained. (Section 722 (g) (3) (D) (I,ii))
- If a dispute occurs over school selection and/or enrollment, the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parents or guardian will receive a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment and the dispute will be handled by the LEA's designated administrator who shall carry out the dispute resolution process described in paragraph (1) (C) of the law. (Section 722 (g) (3) (E) (ii,i,iii))
- The school will work with family, health department, and other agencies to provide the missing records and documents while the student attends classes. (Section 722 (g) (3) (C) (ii,iii))
- All eligible homeless students automatically participate in the federal, state, and local food programs that are offered to other children including: transportation, educational services for children with disabilities and children with limited English proficiency, school nutrition, and vocational technical, gifted and talented programs. Children with disabilities will receive the appropriate services and support on a temporary basis until the necessary paperwork has been received. (Section 722 (g) (4))

- The counselor, secretary, and principal are the only immediate staff members with knowledge that the student resides in a shelter. The student enters the classroom on the same status as every other newly enrolled student, with all the necessary school supplies furnished, having a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school. (Section 722 (g) (6) (ii,i))
- All school expenses are handled through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act funding, such as school supplies, workbooks, locker fees, gym clothes, class fees, transportation, and summer school fees. (Section 723 (d))
- The homeless families, children, and youth are eligible to receive educational services including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the local LEA and may be referred to health care, dental, mental health, and other appropriate services. (Section 722 (g) (6) (iii))

HOMELESS LIAISON DUTIES:

- The **Homeless Liaison** shall ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies. (Section 722 (g) (6) (A) (i))
- The **Homeless Liaison** shall ensure that homeless children and youth are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools of the LEA. (Section 722 (g) (6) (A) (ii))
- The **Homeless Liaison** shall ensure that homeless families receive eligible educational services provided by the LEA including educational programs and health screening. (Section 722 (g) (6) (A) (ii))
- The **Homeless Liaison** shall ensure that homeless families are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children and are encouraged to participate. (Section 722 (g) (6) (A) (iv))
- The **Homeless Liaison** shall ensure that public notice of educational rights to homeless children and youth is disseminated. (Section 722 (g) (6) (A) (vi))
- The **Homeless Liaison** shall ensure that the homeless families are informed of public and private school choice and transportation services. (Section 722 (g) (6) (A) (vii))
- The **Homeless Liaison** shall coordinate and collaborate with community and public and private school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth. (Section 722 (g) (6) (C))
- The **Homeless Liaison** and the LEA will provide professional development activities to heighten public and private school personnel awareness in the basic and academic needs of homeless families. (Section 723 (d) (3))

TUTORIAL SERVICES:

- The **Homeless Liaison** provides scheduled weekly visits to the local public and private schools for the purpose of in and after-school tutoring and mentoring students and parents.
- The **Homeless Liaison** provides school supplies and educational resources for the purpose of completing school projects and homework assignments.
- Weekly the **Homeless Liaison** provides special incentives to encourage excellent academic performance in both the public and private schools.
- Summer school tutoring is provided for a six-week period.

YEARLY EVALUATION:

- The yearly homeless evaluation will be conducted according to the Homeless Grant guidelines. Feedback is obtained from all entities in the homeless program.
- The evaluation is kept on file at the central office.
- Each shelter and school that accommodates homeless children and youth will complete an Education for Homeless Children and Youth Application.
- Each shelter and school that accommodates homeless children and youth provides a yearly needs assessment that consists of: child and family count, schools and/or shelters participation, academic progress, services provided to children, youth, and parents of homeless siblings through the community and the LEA.
- The evaluator will compile needed data by September 30 to submit for application.