

**Section: JFABD**

**SAUGUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
MCKINNEY - VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT  
ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES**

The recent reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1965, "No Child Left Behind," [NCLB] included reauthorization of the McKinney - Vento Education Assistance Act for homeless children and youth. The goal of the McKinney - Vento Education Assistance Act is to ensure that each homeless child or youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths. In addition the McKinney - Vento Education Assistance Act requires every school district to designate a staff person as a liaison for students in homeless situations. This person, who may also be a coordinator for other school programs, will serve as the Massachusetts Department of Education point of contact for education-related issues regarding homeless students in the school district. The Saugus Public Schools shall ensure that every effort is made to comply with this legislation.

**DEFINITION**

Saugus Public Schools is in compliance with the Massachusetts Department of Education which has adopted Section 725(2) of the Act regarding the definition of homeless children and youth:

- Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately, operated shelter for temporary accommodations, an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This definition shall include:

- children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are 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
- unaccompanied youth – a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

**LIAISONS**

The McKinney-Vento Act requires that the Saugus Public Schools along with every school district designate a staff person to serve as the Homeless Education Liaison whose role it is to assist homeless students enroll in school and ensure that they receive the educational services for which they are eligible. Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination with other agencies.

The liaison for the homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youth and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

The Saugus Public Schools' Homeless Liaison is the Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

## ENROLLMENT

Saugus Public Schools must immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment – such as school records, medical records, or proof of residency. Furthermore:

- homeless students have a right to either remain in their school of origin or to attend school where they are temporarily residing
- students who choose to remain in their school of origin have the right to remain there until the end of the school year in which they get permanent housing
- Homeless Education Liaisons must assist students who arrive without records by contacting the previously attended school system to obtain required records

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary.

## TRANSPORTATION

Saugus Public Schools shall ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth, to and from the school of origin. Furthermore:

- if the homeless students continues to live in an area served by the district in which the school of origin is located, that district must provide or arrange transportation
- if the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his or her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin
- if the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally

## ACCESS TO COMPARABLE SERVICES

Homeless students are to be provided services and education programs comparable to those received by other students and for which they meet eligibility criteria, such as services under Title I or similar state or local programs; programs for students with disabilities; programs for students with limited English proficiency; preschool programs; vocational or technical programs; gifted and talented programs; and school nutrition programs. To the extent practical and as required by law, the Saugus Public Schools will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible.

**NOTE:** To expedite the delivery of nutritional benefits, school officials may accept documentation that students are homeless from the local educational liaison or the director of homeless shelter where students reside as the determination of eligibility for free lunch.

To the extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead or remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the Saugus Public Schools will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought – pending resolution of the dispute – and must provide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth with both a written statement of the school placement decision and a notice of the right to appeal the decision. The Saugus Public Schools shall refer the unaccompanied youth, parent or guardian to the Homeless Education Liaison, who will expeditiously carry out the dispute resolution process. The final decision in such situation resides with the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education.

## **UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH & CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN STATE CARE OR CUSTODY**

Unaccompanied youth are youth who are homeless; not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian; and not in the custody of a state agency. This definition includes youth living on the street, in inadequate housing, denied housing by their families, those who have left home voluntarily, even when their parent(s) want them to return home, and youth doubled up with friends or relatives. Also, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, Massachusetts Department of Education has determined that children and youth in state care or custody who have been placed out of their homes into temporary, transitional, or emergency living placements are awaiting foster care placement and are therefore homeless.

Unaccompanied youth or students in state care or custody who are awaiting foster care are entitled to the same educational rights and services, including transportation, under McKinney-Vento as any homeless child or youth in the care of their parent(s) or guardian(s).

Approved by School Committee September 6, 2007