



Los Angeles County  
Office of Education

Los Angeles County Office of Education

## Homeless Education

(562) 401-5397



### MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

All school-aged homeless children are entitled to the same free and appropriate public education that is provided to non-homeless students. All local educational agencies (LEA) are required to designate a staff to ensure compliance with this federal mandate and must have enough time to do fulfill these responsibilities. Federal mandates require that LEA's remove barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and academic success of homeless students and must appoint a liaison to address the educational needs of homeless youth. Compliance with the enactment of additional state laws in regard to the educational needs of homeless youth are also the responsibility of the LEA homeless liaison.

#### FEDERAL EDUCATION DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

A "homeless" student is defined as a person between 0 to 22\*\* years of age, who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and may include:

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason ("doubling or tripling up")
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to the lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or a similar setting
- Abandoned, runaway or pushed-out youth or migratory children living in any of the above circumstances

*\*\*Due to Head Start and Special Education service provisions*

#### SCHOOL SELECTION / STUDENT RIGHTS

- Homeless student can attend the school of attendance when he/she first become homeless, the last school he/she attended or any school he/she attended within the past fifteen (15) months (*School of Origin*), if feasible; or the student can attend the school in the area where the family is temporarily residing (*School of Residence*). This pertains to homeless preschool students as well.
- Student can remain at the selected school site throughout the duration of homelessness.
- Homeless students have matriculation rights to the next school level (e.g. elementary to middle, middle to high), even if the next school is located in another LEA.
- When the family gains permanent housing: a kindergarten through eighth grade student can remain at the current school for the duration of that academic year; a homeless student in high school, may remain there through graduation.
- Transportation, if needed, provided to the end of the year once permanently housed
- Students living situation is a confidential record.
- LEA liaisons can certify homeless students and families for HUD programs.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth age 14+ are exempted from the parental consent requirement to receive mental health assessments and services.

## **ENROLLMENT**

- Schools must immediately enroll homeless students, regardless of the lack of:
  - \*Academic Records
  - \*Medical Records
  - \*Proof of Residence
  - \*Immunization Records
- Enrollment means attending and fully participating in the academic program.

## **ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTATION**

Documents provided to the family may include:

- Standard Enrollment Forms
- Night-time Residency Questionnaire: Best practice to include in the enrollment packet to allow parents to self-identify and distributed to all students annually to identify students that became homeless after initial enrollment.
- Free/Reduced Lunch: Homeless Student is automatically eligible. No income verification required.
- Caregiver Authorization Affidavit: Use when a caregiver other than the parent is enrolling a student.
- Affidavits: Per district policies, e.g. temporary residence, proof of age of minor, etc.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

- Dispute process addresses issues with eligibility, school selection or enrollment to the school of origin or the school of residence.
- LEA must immediately enroll the student pending the resolution of the dispute..
- The LEA must provide the parent with a written explanation of the enrollment decision as well as information regarding the LEA's appeal process per policy.
- The policy must include information to appeal to the county and to the state..
- Any other issue for homeless enrollment may go through the LEAs Uniform Complaint Procedure.

## **DISTRICT AND CHARTER SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Designate a contact person as a liaison for homeless children and youth, ensuring that homeless children are identified, enrolled, and receive equitable access to high-quality education and support services. This includes preschool children and unaccompanied youth.
- Ensure homeless youth are immediately enrolled and eliminate delays caused by lack of records, permanent address, immunization, and/or other enrollment requirements; even if the youth missed a deadline or application period.
- Review and revise policies that may impede homeless students' access to school, including preschool.
- Increase awareness of the educational rights of homeless preschooler and school-age children and unaccompanied youth through public notice.
- Provide access to needed resources and referrals such as backpacks, schools supplies, clothing, transportation, tutoring, counseling, afterschool programs, etc.
- Ensure that homeless students are not segregated or stigmatized because of their homeless status.
- Keep youth in their school of origin to the extent feasible, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of parents/guardians or the unaccompanied youth.
- Provide homeless parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Ensure homeless parents and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of the enrollment options and educational opportunities.
- Ensure that unaccompanied youth are enrolled immediately, participate in credit accrual programs, and informed of status as independent student for financial aid.