

Administrative Procedures for Policy 251: Students Experiencing Homelessness
(Attachment for Policy 251)

Training

The District's Regional Coordinator shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance activities offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.[6]

The District's Regional Coordinator shall arrange professional development programs for school staff, including office staff, at a minimum, annually.[6]

School personnel providing services to students experiencing homelessness, including school enrollment staff, shall receive, at a minimum, annually, professional development and support to:[6]

- 1 Improve identification of a student experiencing homelessness 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 educational needs of such children.

Enrollment

The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if:

1. The student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. [3][11][12][13][14][15][16][17]
2. The application or enrollment deadline has passed during any period of homelessness. [6][11]
3. School staff questions the validity of the parent's homeless claim. The Dispute Resolution procedure, referenced in this policy, should be used in these cases after the student has been enrolled. Only in cases where the school is at or over its building capacity will the student be assigned to the next closest school with space.
4. The District's Regional Coordinator shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academics or other records.[6][11][12][13][14][15][16][17]

5. The District may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information.[6]
6. If the District is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's assignment within the school.[6][18]

Best Interest Determination

In determining the best interest of a child or youth, the District shall:

1. Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.[6]
2. Consider student-centered factors related to impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety, giving priority to the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.[6]
3. If, after such consideration, the District determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the District 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.[6]

Placement

In accordance with the child's or youth's best interest, the District shall continue to enroll a student experiencing homelessness 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.[6]

Parents/Guardians of a student experiencing homelessness may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the student is actually living or other schools.[6]

The District's Regional Coordinator 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.[6]

The District shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of any District decision related to school selection or placement, including the right to appeal.[6]

Dispute Resolution -

If a dispute arises over eligibility, enrollment or school selection:[6]

1. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the district's Regional Coordinator, who shall assist in the dispute resolution process.
2. The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.
3. The District's Regional Coordinator 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 District's written decision or file a complaint with the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.

Comparable Services

Students experiencing homelessness shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other District students. including, but not limited to:[1][6][19]

1. Transportation services:[20]
2. School nutrition programs:[21]
3. Career and technical education:[22]
4. Preschool programs;
5. Educational programs for which the student meets eligibility criteria, such as:
 - a. Services provided under Title I or similar state or local programs:[23]
 - b. Programs for English Language Learners:[24]
 - c. Programs for students with disabilities:[10]
 - d. Programs for gifted and talented students; and[25]

6. Support to help ensure that students experiencing homelessness can participate fully in extracurricular school activities.