

## Homeless Student Rights and Enrollment Practices

Children and youth who are experiencing homelessness must receive the same educational opportunities as other students. Providing education and appropriate services to children and youth who are homeless can present unique challenges. Cambridge-Isanti Schools, Independent School District #911, has the following procedures and practices in place to identify and serve students who are homeless. Proper identification can help assure that students are provided needed services, that the District is providing service in accordance with state and federal requirements, and that the District receives any financial resources available in support of educating homeless students.

### **Homeless Student Definition:**

Legislation known as the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), (42 U.S.C. 11431) considers homeless children and youth to be individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- Children and youth sharing the housing of others persons due to loss of housing (doubled up), economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds; are living in emergency or transitional shelters, are abandoned in hospitals or are awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youths 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 youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

### **Enrollment Procedures:**

In addition to the Cambridge-Isanti Schools enrollment practices for all students, parents, students and someone knowledgeable about the student's homeless status, can complete the Homeless Enrollment Form. This form is required if students meet any of the following criteria:

- Those living in emergency, domestic abuse or transitional shelters
- Those living temporarily with other family members or friends because they do not have a place of their own
- Those living in their car, outside or in a public place
- A child staying in emergency foster care (short-term, this does not include foster placement)
- An unaccompanied youth who is not in physical custody of a parent or legal guardian

### **Student Rights:**

Under the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), students in homeless situations have the right to a free and appropriate public education. Our program ensures homeless students the following educational rights:

- Stay in their school-of-origin (if distance to school is considered reasonable), which is the school attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled;



- Enroll in any school which non-homeless students living in the attendance area are eligible to attend;
- Enroll in a new school without immunization, proof of residential status, school records, proof of guardianship or other documents;
- Receive transportation services to their school of origin to the extent feasible;
- Receive services (including transportation, preschool, meals, special education) comparable to those provided to other students; and
- Have their enrollment disputes expeditiously addressed by the homeless district liaison and have the right to attend their school during the dispute resolution process.

### **Dispute Resolution Procedures:**

Families and youth in homeless situations may be unaware of their right to dispute placement and enrollment decisions. When disputes arise, too often, students are kept out of school during the dispute resolution process. This interruption in education can severely damage students' academic progress. Cambridge-Isanti Schools requires that disputes regarding the educational placement of a student in a homeless situation will be expeditiously addressed through a dispute resolution process. Parents or guardians and unaccompanied youth must be informed of the process and in the event of the dispute; the student must be immediately enrolled in the school of choice while the dispute is being resolved.

If a family or youth in homeless situations attending school wants to pursue their right to a dispute or if the district disagrees with a parent, guardian or homeless youth regarding an issue related to the rights of a homeless student, the following steps must be taken:

- The school district must immediately enroll the students and arrange for transportation and other services as appropriate.
- With the involvement of the District Homeless Liaison, who is the Director of Teaching and Learning, attempt to discuss the issues to determine if more information is needed to resolve the issue.
- If the issue cannot be resolved, a letter will be delivered to the parent/guardian or youth explaining the district's position as to the homelessness-related dispute. This letter will include a list of advocates or agencies available to provide assistance.
- Either party may send a [written request to the Minnesota Department of Education](#) Homeless State Coordinator asking the State Coordinator to review such decision for compliance with applicable law. Any such request must include documentation related to the dispute resolution proceeding.
- The State Coordinator may request any additional information from either party that he or she deems relevant in resolving the issue.

### **Transportation Requirements:**

- Homeless students shall be provided with transportation services comparable to other students in the school district. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C)(i)(III)(cc) and (g)(4)(A))
- Upon request by the student's parent, guardian, or homeless education liaison, the school district shall provide transportation for a homeless student as follows:
  - A resident student who becomes homeless and is residing in a public or private shelter location or has other non-shelter living arrangements within the school district shall be provided transportation to and from the student's school of origin



and the shelter or other non-shelter location if the shelter or non-shelter location is two or more miles from the school of origin and the student's transportation privileges have not been revoked. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)(I))

- A resident student who becomes homeless and is residing in a public or private shelter location or has other non-shelter living arrangements outside of the school district shall be provided transportation to and from the student's school of origin and the shelter or other non-shelter location if the shelter or non-shelter location is two or more miles from the school of origin and the student's transportation privileges have not been revoked, unless the school district and the school district in which the student is temporarily placed agree that the school district in which the student is temporarily placed shall provide transportation. (Minn. Stat. § 125A.51(f); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)(II))
- If a nonresident student is homeless and is residing in a public or private homeless shelter or has other non-shelter living arrangements within the school district, the school district may provide transportation services between the shelter or non-shelter location and the student's school of origin outside of the school district upon agreement with the school district in which the school of origin is located. (Minn. Stat. § 125A.51(f))

### **ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES:**

In order to ensure that a student's homeless status is identified and documented, assistance from any staff member who may have such knowledge, including but not limited to: administrators, administrative assistants, counselors, special education staff and classroom teachers is required. If you have such knowledge, please check with the building administrative assistant or the counseling office secretary in your building to determine if the student is already reported as homeless. If not, please assist the student or family in completing the Homeless Student Documentation Form which is also available in every school office. You may also complete the form on behalf of the family if you know that their living situation meets the homeless criteria. The building administrative assistant or the counseling office is responsible for collecting the Homeless Student Documentation Form. Please file the original form in the student's cumulative file and send a copy to the Teaching and Learning Department/Homeless Liason at the Educational Services Center.