

School Board Policy 411.1 Rule

Families in Transition

A. Admission and Placement of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

When a youth experiencing homelessness seeks enrollment in the District, these procedures shall be followed:

1. The youth's family shall be advised of their choice of schools. The youth shall be allowed to either continue their education in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness and until the end of the school year in which the youth becomes permanently housed, or be placed in the school of current residence. "School of origin" means the school that the youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the youth was last enrolled, including a preschool. When the youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the term "school of origin" shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

School selection decisions shall be made based on the best interest of the youth experiencing homelessness. In determining the best interest of the youth, the District shall:

- a. Presume that keeping the youth in the school of origin is in the youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the family and
- b. Consider student-centered factors related to the youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of the youth experiencing homelessness, giving priority to the request of the youth's family.

If the District assigns a youth experiencing homelessness to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the family, the District shall provide the family with a written explanation of the reason for its determination, including information regarding the right to appeal the school selection or enrollment decision. School selection or enrollment disputes shall be handled as outlined in Section B below.

2. The youth experiencing homelessness shall be immediately enrolled in the assigned school. This must be done even if the youth is (a) unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization or other health records, proof of residency or other documentation, or (b) has missed application or enrollment deadlines during periods of homelessness. The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the youth to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the youth needs to obtain immunizations, screenings, or other health records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the family to the District's Homeless Liaison, who is expected to assist in obtaining the necessary records.
3. The youth experiencing homelessness shall be placed in an appropriate grade level by the building principal or designee, using the same procedures that are used for placing other youth attending that school. Educational programming and services shall be provided for the youth consistent with legal requirements and established District policies and procedures.

4. Upon a determination of school placement, the District shall evaluate the transportation arrangements for the youth experiencing homelessness in light of applicable legal requirements. If it is determined to be in the best interest of the youth to continue to be enrolled in their school of origin and transportation is requested by the family, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin until the end of the school year during which the youth becomes permanently housed.
5. Once enrolled, youth experiencing homelessness shall have all the rights and privileges of other youth attending school in the District and shall be subject to the same school rules and regulations.

B. Eligibility, School Selection or Enrollment Disputes

1. If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment in a school, the District's Homeless Liaison shall be contacted and they shall attempt to resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The family shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision on the dispute and a notice of the right to appeal the decision.
2. The youth experiencing homelessness shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals.

Internal Procedure

It is the belief of the School District of Black River Falls that all students can and will learn. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act removes barriers to learning for families experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the Families in Transition program is to promote academic success by removing barriers for students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. Families in Transition will be served using all resources available to the district.

Eligibility

Under McKinney-Vento, the definition of “homeless” includes individuals who are:

- Doubled up with friends/relatives due to financial reasons/economic hardship
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in motels/hotels or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Unsheltered, living in cars, parks, or spaces not designed for humans to live
- Unsuitable living conditions, such as lack of utilities, mold, infestations, or dangers

Migratory students and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above criteria.

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the family and the LEA’s liaison.

Enrollment

The school shall immediately enroll the student, even if they lack required documents, have missed application or enrollment deadlines, have outstanding fees, fines, or absences, or apply without a parent/guardian. They should be attending school and participating fully in school activities. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. Students who do not live with a guardian may enroll themselves in school.

Families will complete a residence questionnaire when enrolling their student(s) at the beginning of the school year or when they move into the district to allow for early identification.

Identified students will be enrolled immediately even if they lack immunizations and/or records ordinarily required for enrollment.

Office personnel should contact the Homeless Liaison as soon as possible to assist the family with supplies and other needs.

Residency

Residency is when the student is personally present somewhere within the district with a purpose to remain but not necessarily to remain permanently. The student shall be considered a resident when living with a guardian not solely for school purposes or for participation in extracurricular activities.

School Selection

Placement in a school shall be in the student's best interest. The student's education may continue in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness and/or in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, or for the duration of the academic year, if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year.

The school of origin means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including a preschool and including the designated receiving school at the next grade level for feeder schools.

In determining the best interests of the student to the extent feasible, the student will be kept in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's family for the duration of the homelessness. Student-centered factors will be considered, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety.

In the case of unaccompanied youth, the LEA will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the requests of such unaccompanied youth.

If the district determines that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the family, the district shall provide a written explanation of the reason(s) for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such family including information regarding the right to appeal.

Comparable Services

Each student shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other student in the school selected, such as:

- Preschool programs
- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria
- Programs for at-risk students
- Programs and courses for talented and gifted students
- School nutrition programs
- Title I services
- Before and after school programs
- Tutoring programs
- Summer school programs
- Online learning
- Extracurricular activities
- School supplies

Once homeless status is determined, the family will continue to receive services for the remainder of the school year, even if the family becomes permanently housed.

Transportation

Comparable transportation options will be provided to the family by the district to/from the school of origin until the end of the school year when the student obtains permanent housing to allow for school stability. Once permanent housing is found, the family has a choice to stay in the school of origin or attend the school in the attendance area where they found housing. If a family chooses to stay in the school of origin, transportation will be provided until the end of that given school year. In the case where the school of origin and current

residence are located in different LEAs, the two LEAs will agree on a method for transportation and share costs.

In order for transportation to be set up, the homeless liaison will determine with the family the best means of transportation. The homeless liaison will assist with the completion of the bus contract and advocate for expedited processing.

If busing is suspended or discontinued due to behavior reports, the Homeless Liaison must be contacted and an alternate transportation plan must be communicated with the family.

School Meals

Students of families in transition are automatically eligible for free school meals for the remainder of that given school year without completing additional paperwork. The homeless liaison will communicate with the Business Office to ensure these services are established.

Fee Waiver

School fees are automatically waived and device insurance is paid for by the district without the requirement of additional paperwork. The homeless liaison will communicate with the Business Office to ensure these services are established.

Homeless Liaison

The District will designate a McKinney-Vento liaison. The homeless liaison shall ensure that:

- Students in transition are identified by school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies.
- Students in transition enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the district.
- Students in transition receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services.
- Families in transition are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their student.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated throughout the community.
- There is compliance with all policies and procedures and mediates enrollment disputes
- The family is informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin.
- Ensures the coordination of services between the district and community resources.
- Assistance is provided to students who do not have immunizations or immunization medical records to obtain them.
- Students are not segregated on the basis of their living situation.
- There is support for academic success, including credit accrual and transition to higher education.
- Policies and procedures are kept up to date with changes to the McKinney-Vento Act.

The current Homeless Liaison is Vicki Michalski, the School District Social Worker, ext. 5110 (victoria.michalski@brf.org or 715-670-1427).

Confidentiality

Homeless status is confidential and is only disclosed to school staff as needed.

Disputes

If the family disputes the school assignment determined by the district, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. Disputes shall be resolved as expeditiously as possible. Families may initiate the dispute resolution process by contacting the District's Homeless Liaison.

Complaint/Dispute Resolution Process

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act, the Black River Falls School District has established a process for families to address disputes.

A homeless youth has the right to remain at their school of origin (public school that the youth attended when permanently housed, or the public school in which the youth was last enrolled) or to attend any public school that other students who live in the attendance area are eligible to attend.

If the family disputes the school assignment determined by the district, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. Disputes shall be resolved as expeditiously as possible. Families may initiate the dispute resolution process by contacting the District's Homeless Liaison.

When a dispute arises over school placement, the family will complete a Student Placement Dispute Form and return to their child's school office. The form will be sent to the District's Homeless Liaison who will make a determination and send the disputant a copy of the Written Notification of Dispute Resolution form within 3 business days.

The family has the right to appeal the decision made by the District's Homeless Liaison by submitting the Student Placement Dispute Form to the Superintendent. Families not satisfied at this level may make an appeal to the Board of Education.

If a dispute is not resolved after going through the District's outlined process, the family may send a request for resolution to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.