

Students

Welfare

Equal Educational Access and Opportunities

The Watertown Unified School District is committed to the task of providing education for every student in the District for as long as the student can benefit from attendance and the student's conduct is compatible with the welfare of the entire student body.

Children of homeless individuals and unaccompanied homeless youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian) residing in the District shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including comparable services, as provided to other children and youth who reside in the District. Homeless children and youth shall not be required to attend a separate school or program for homeless children and shall not be stigmatized by school personnel.

It is the policy of the board to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational programs as provided to other children and youth who reside in the District. They shall be provided services comparable to services offered other children who attend District schools, including transportation services, educational services for which children/youth meet eligibility criteria (e.g. special education, Title I programming, gifted and talented programming), vocational and technical education programs and school nutrition programs.

The term "homeless children and youth" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youth who:

1. Are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
2. Are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
3. Are living in emergency shelters.
4. Are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
5. Have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
6. Runaway children or children who are abandoned.
7. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, or similar settings.

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

District Liaison for Homeless Children and Youth

The Director of Teaching and Learning has been designated as the District's liaison for homeless children and youth and will ensure that:

1. Homeless children and youth residing in the District are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.

2. Homeless children and youth enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools in the District.
3. Homeless families, children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to other appropriate services (e.g. health care services).
4. The parent/guardian of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth is informed of the educational and related opportunities available to them and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the child/youth.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth is disseminated where such children and youth receive services such as the schools and family shelters.
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with legal requirements.
7. The parent/guardian of a homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless youth is fully informed of transportation services that may be available to them under the law and assist them in accessing such transportation services.

Admission and Placement of Homeless Child or Youth

When a homeless child or youth seeks enrollment in the District, these procedures shall be followed:

1. The homeless child's parent/guardian or any unaccompanied homeless youth shall be advised of their choice of schools. The homeless child/youth shall be allowed to either continue his/her education in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness or be placed in the school that non-homeless children/youth who live in the attendance area in which the child/youth is actually living are eligible to attend. School selection decisions shall be made based on the best interest of the homeless child/youth.

If the District assigns a homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent/guardian, the District shall provide the child's parent/guardian with a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal the school selection decision. An unaccompanied homeless youth shall also be provided notice of his/her right to appeal the school selection decision. School selection disputes shall be handled as outlined below.

2. The homeless child/youth shall be immediately enrolled in the assigned school. This must be done even if the child/youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation. The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child/youth to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the child/youth needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent/guardian or the unaccompanied homeless youth to the District's liaison for homeless children and youths, who is expected to assist in obtaining the necessary immunization or medical records.
3. The homeless child/youth shall be placed in an appropriate grade level by building principal or designee, using the same procedures that are used for placing non-homeless children and youth

attending that school. Educational programming and services shall be provided for the child/youth consistent with legal requirements and established District policies and procedures.

4. Once enrolled, homeless children/youth shall have all the rights and privileges of non-homeless children attending school in the District and shall be subject to the same school rules and regulations.

School Selection or Enrollment Disputes

1. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the District's liaison for homeless children and youth shall be contacted and he/she shall attempt to resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent(s)/guardian or homeless youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the District's decision on the dispute and a notice of the right to appeal to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
2. The homeless child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which the enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.

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