

***North Pike School District
Homeless Plan
2020-2021***

***Meeting the Needs of Homeless Students
Policies, Procedure, and Helpful Tips***

NPSD Homeless Committee and School Contacts

Scott Hallmark.....Assistant Superintendent
Glenda Leonard.....Curriculum Director
Theresa Brumfield.....Counselor, NPES
Lora Stone..... Counselor, NPMS
Crystal Whatley.....Counselor, CTC

Meeting the Needs of Homeless Students

Twice, in August and January of each school year, counselors in each school in the North Pike School District will review the Homeless statuses of their students. The school counselor is responsible for meeting with students and their parents/guardians to access their current situation to determine if all of the students' needs are being met. This information is then submitted to the school principal and the district's Homeless Liaison, who, in turn, reviews the data and takes actions to ensure that each student has a positive, productive school experience.

The homeless liaisons duties include:

1. Helping unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes.
2. Informing unaccompanied youth of their rights to transportation and assisting youth in accessing transportation.
3. Providing unaccompanied youth with notice of their right to appeal school or school district decisions and ensuring that youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes.

School personnel will be made aware of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth. School employees are responsible for meeting these needs. This includes:

Identifying Unaccompanied Youth

1. Principals must train all school enrollment staff, secretaries, school counselors, and teachers on the definition of unaccompanied youth.
2. School staff must highlight the warning signs of homelessness (e.g. frequent absences, declines in academic achievement, disengagement, stress), and principals must encourage staff to regularly talk to students about what's going on in their lives.
3. School staff must be creative and utilize new techniques, such as involving social workers, surveying peers, and using enrollment questionnaires. (In employing different methods of identification, always remember that youth may be living in a variety of situations (e.g. shelters, doubled-up, in cars, on the streets, etc.) and that they deserve to have their privacy and dignity respected.

Disseminating Information

1. The district will develop materials such as posters, brochures, pamphlets, and fliers that explain McKinney-Vento rights information to youth and make these items available in school attendance offices and distribute them to youth service providers.
2. The district's Homeless Liaison will train school and school district personnel on the education rights of unaccompanied youth and should require them to distribute informational materials and discuss their contents with the unaccompanied youth they identify.

***Who is homeless?
(McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001 – Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act – Sec 725)***

The term “homeless children and youth”— (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and (B) includes — (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;(ii) 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...(iii)children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus train stations, or similar settings; and (iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Enrollment Procedures

1. Ensure that the enrollment staff in all schools are familiar with McKinney-Vento requirements and procedures related to enrolling unaccompanied youth.
2. Train school and school district staff to distinguish between “throwaway” and runaway youth
3. Ensure that enrollment procedures are carefully crafted so they do not create further barriers or delay enrollment. For example, identifying a caregiver is not a prerequisite to enrollment.

Ensuring Appropriate Educational Services

1. Revise LEA policies, such as those related to attendance, to ensure that they remove barriers to academic success for unaccompanied youth.
2. Revise or develop LEA policies to address issues related to who signs for unaccompanied youth to participate in field trips or extracurricular activities.
3. Provide unaccompanied youth the opportunity to enroll in diversified learning opportunities such as vocational education, yet ensure that they are integrated with the mainstream school environment, including extracurricular activities, as much as possible.
4. Develop strategies to continue educating students who have been suspended or expelled from school.

Assisting With Non-Educational Needs

1. Provide a “safe place” at school that includes trained mentors, school counselors, or social workers that unaccompanied youth can access as needed.
2. Contact relevant social service agencies and gather information, pamphlets, and applications concerning valuable services such as food stamps. Make such materials available to identified unaccompanied youth.
3. Meet with and coordinate with relevant social service and medical agencies to develop policies and procedures to facilitate an unaccompanied youth’s access to services and treatment with sensitivity and urgency.
4. Develop a list of referrals that includes shelters, youth hotlines, and other youth services providers. Various national organizations and agencies are useful resources for youth and those trying to assist them:

Covenant House Runaway Hotline: 1-800-999-9999 (24 hrs)

www.covenanthouse.org

National Network for Youth: 202-738-7949

www.nn4youth.org

National Runaway Switchboard Runaway Hotline: 1-800-621-4000 (24 hrs)

www.nrs Crisisline.org

Stand Up for Kids

1-800-365-4KID

www.standupforkids.org

What Can Liaisons and Service Providers Do to Assist Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Access Financial Aid?

Under the Higher Education Act, other youth who meet the definition of “independent student” can apply for federal aid without parental information or signature, including youth who are orphans, wards of the court, veterans, graduate students, married, or have a dependent. A financial aid administrator at a college can also designate a student as independent due to “other unusual circumstances.”

McKinney-Vento school district liaisons, service providers, and unaccompanied homeless youth should work with financial aid administrators to streamline access to financial aid. In addition, unaccompanied youth may need assistance overcoming common barriers that students face in trying to fill out the FAFSA, such as not having all the documents they need, not knowing how to fill out the form, and being overwhelmed by the amount of information the application requests. Strategies and resources are provided below.

1. Inform unaccompanied homeless youth that they can go to college, even without parental financial support. Too often, unaccompanied youth assume that college is not an option for them because they are unaware of processes to access financial aid.
2. Support unaccompanied homeless youth throughout the financial aid process, including by connecting them to College Access organizations and events. Navigating the financial aid system can be difficult for students with parents - young people who are homeless and trying to survive on their own will need caring adults to help guide them and encourage their persistence.
3. Help youth go to college, and stay in college, by assisting them to find scholarships for which they are eligible. www.FinAid.org and Student Aid on the Web are two excellent places to begin a search for scholarships.
4. Share information about the needs of unaccompanied youth, and the current and pending higher education law provisions, with high school counselors, social workers, and community service providers, so that they are informed and able to assist unaccompanied youth.
5. Develop relationships with local financial aid administrators to inform them about unaccompanied homeless youth, the role of school district liaisons in identifying and assisting these young people, and the provisions of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007. Such relationships may ease the process for future unaccompanied homeless youth who wish to go to these colleges.
6. Locate and develop a relationship with a state or local college access organization in your community. College access organizations provide counseling, advice, and financial assistance.

Mississippi Administrative Procedure for Complaints or Appeals under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) guidelines

What must be included in a complaint?

When a complaint cannot be resolved at the LEA level, the complaint must be submitted in writing to the Mississippi Department of Education, Federal Programs Office. Persons issuing verbal complaints will be asked to complete a written complaint form prior to any official investigation, or assisted with the completion of the complaint form.

The complaint must include the name and address of the person submitting the complaint and a description of the complaint. The complaint must also include a statement which assures that to the best of the complainant's knowledge, the agency has violated a requirement of a federal statute or regulation that applies to an applicable program. In addition, the facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated must be included.

Where should a complaint be sent?

The mailing address is: Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Innovative Support, Suite 162 Central High School, Post Office Box 771, Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0771. The office may also be contacted via telephone at (601) 359-3499.

What happens to complaints after they are received by the Federal Programs Office?

A. Complaint Review

- a. In the first level of review, a complaint shall be answered by the Bureau Director, with assistance from staff.
- b. The Bureau Director shall determine whether additional information is necessary, if so appropriate program staff will notify the agency involved, and conduct an on-site review investigating the complaint.
- c. The Bureau Director shall determine whether additional information is necessary. If there are serious violations, verified after the on-site review, then the information gathered will be forwarded to other appropriate offices or organizations.
- d. Once the investigation has been completed, the Federal Programs Office will issue a letter stating the findings of facts. The letter stating the findings of fact shall be mailed no later than 60 calendar days from the date the Federal Programs Office receives the complaint in writing.
- e. If areas of noncompliance are found, corrective action will be required and timelines for completion indicated. All parties will be informed of the areas of noncompliance and the required corrective actions.
- f. The Federal Programs Office may extend the 60-day timeline, if exceptional circumstances exist. Examples of exceptional circumstances may be, but not limited to:
 - ✓ The complexity of the issues;
 - ✓ The need for additional information; and/or
 - ✓ The unavailability of any of the necessary parties.

B. Appeals

- a. An individual may appeal an administrative determination of the Bureau Director. The individual must submit the appeal in writing to the address above. The appeal must be postmarked no later than 25 calendar days after the date the Bureau Director's determination is made.
- b. A final decision on the complaint shall be made after consulting with the State Superintendent of Education or designee.
- c. The State Superintendent of Education shall provide written notification to the individual who submitted the complaint about the disposition of the complaint no later than 30 days after final action.
- d. The complainant has the right to request the Secretary of Education to review the decision of the State Department of Education. This review is at the Secretary's discretion.
- e. In matters involving violations of section 9503 (participation of private school children), the complainant has the right to request the Secretary of Education to review the decision of the Mississippi State Department of Education. The Secretary will follow the procedures in section 9501(b). For additional information on complaint procedures for participation of private school children, visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg111.html#sec9503>