

HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES

To the extent practical and as required by law, the Hadley Public Schools will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, English Language Learners education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

The Massachusetts Department of Education has adopted Section 725(2) of the Act regarding the definition of homeless children and youth:

- *individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.*

This definition shall include:

- children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- children and youth 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 youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above; and
- unaccompanied youth – a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

To the extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living, or other schools.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to policy. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the Hadley Public Schools' liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested pursuant to policy. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with policy, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin, the Hadley Public School will coordinate with the other school district the transportation services necessary for the student and will divide the costs equally.

The Hadley Public Schools' liaison for homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families, other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers, and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The Hadley Public Schools liaison will also review and recommend amendments to School Committee policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

LEGAL REFS.: Title I, Part C
No Child Left Behind Act, 2002

Adopted By The
Hadley School Committee: September 22, 2014