It is the policy of the Seattle School Board that every student receives the high-quality instruction, supports, and interventions they need to graduate high school on time and prepared for the future. Though students and families experiencing homelessness may face added barriers, the District is committed to partnering with them and providing supports to the extent practical and as required by law, and equal access to the same free, appropriate public education (including public preschool education) provided to other students. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school, as well as to mitigating educational barriers to their academic success. Additionally, the District will take responsible steps to ensure homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school on the basis of their homeless status. Homeless students will be provided District services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable preschool programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, advanced learning programs and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

A. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
B. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
C. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
D. Are abandoned in hospitals;
E. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
F. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings;
G. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples; or
H. Unaccompanied youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian or in homeless situations described above.

The Superintendent shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the District’s liaison for homeless students and their families. The Homeless Liaison
or their designee determine eligibility for rights and services the McKinney-Vento Act. The Homeless Liaison and their staff will apply the definition of homeless students (“individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence”), to make an appropriate determination of eligibility.

The Homeless Liaison ensures that every school district site designates at least one Building Point of Contact. The building Point of Contact is responsible for coordinating activity to support the process of identifying homeless students at the building level and connecting them to the District McKinney-Vento staff to determine program eligibility and access to educational support services. The District Homeless Liaison is responsible for training the building Points of Contact.

**Enrollment and Best Interest Determination**

Changing schools may greatly hinder the academic achievement and social emotional development of students experiencing homelessness. In making a determination as to which school is in the homeless student’s best interest to attend, the District will presume that it is in the student’s best interest to remain enrolled in their school of origin unless such enrollment is against the wishes of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth or a student-centered transportation factor is identified. 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. Parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the local attendance area school where they are currently residing or an option school. Attendance options will be made available to homeless families on the same terms as families residing in the District, including attendance rights acquired by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, and intra- and inter-district choice options.

**Enrollment Dispute**

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, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be informed of the District’s decision and the reasons therefor (or informed if the student does not qualify for McKinney-Vento, if applicable) and their appeal rights in writing and in a language they can understand. The District’s Homeless Liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state policy. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the District shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to District policies. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to missed application deadlines or fees, fines or absences at a previous school, or the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including academic records, medical records, proof of residency, mailing address, emergency contact information, or other documentation. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exemption. Students and families should be encouraged to
obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the District Homeless Liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student’s previous school shall be requested pursuant to District policies. The District will comply with all requirements of the State’s Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) where applicable.

Transportation
To mitigate educational disruption caused by mobility, the District will provide eligible students experiencing homelessness transportation for them to continue attending their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. To determine the best interest of the student regarding transportation, the District Homeless Liaison will consider the following student-centered factors:

A. The developmental appropriateness or age of the child or youth;
B. The distance of the commute and the impact it may have on the student’s education;
C. Personal safety issues;
D. The student’s need for specially designed instruction (e.g., special education and related services);
E. The length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location; and
F. The time remaining in the school year.

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 in Seattle Public Schools, McKinney-Vento staff will collaborate with the District Transportation Department to coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student to get to and from school, including before or after school activities. Both districts will divide the costs of transporting the students to and from their school of origin equally.

Coordination and Notice of Rights and Services
The District Homeless Liaison 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 where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act, such as schools, family shelters and food banks. The notice must be disseminated in a manner and form that parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth receiving such services can understand, including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, translated in their native language. The District Homeless Liaison will also review and recommend amendments to District policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students and will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities, as determined by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) coordinator for homeless children and youth programs.
**Other Provisions**
The District shall ensure that school personnel providing services to homeless students, including administrators, building educators, and staff supporting extracurricular activities, receive professional development and other support. The District will strongly encourage all staff, including substitute and regular bus drivers, to annually review OSPI’s identification of student homelessness video.

Each year, the District shall provide students and families information about services and support for homeless students using a variety of communications.

The Superintendent or his or her designee is granted the authority to develop procedures in order to implement this policy.

Adopted: December 2011
Revised: May 2015, July 2017
Cross Reference: Policy Nos. 3120; 3231; 3413; 3210SP.A
Related Superintendent Procedure: 3115SP
Previous Policies: D118.00
Management Resources: *Policy News*, December 2014; October 2004; October 2002