Homeless Education

Policy and Procedures

# Russellville City Schools

2020-2021

ADMISSION POLICY FOR HOMELESS, MIGRANT, IMMIGRANT AND ELL

STUDENTS

Pursuant to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and the McKinney-Vento homeless Assistance Act, all homeless children, migrants, immigrants and English language learners must have equal access to the same free appropriate public education, including public preschool education, provided other children and youth. This shall be the policy of the Russellville City School System. Such children will be provided the opportunity to meet the same challenging state content and state student performance standards to which all students are held without being stigmatized or isolated.

The enrollment of homeless, migrant, foster care, immigrant and limited English proficient children and youth shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

* Lack of birth certificate
* Lack of school records or transcripts
* Lack of immunization or health records
* Lack of proof of residency
* Lack of transportation
* Unaccompanied; no guardian

The Russellville City School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of the Homeless Education program. The district shall notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources.

The Russellville City School System shall conduct an annual evaluation of its Homeless Education program to determine the effectiveness of the program. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement.

DEFINITION:

For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Russellville City School

System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines homeless children and youth (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular,, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:

* Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled up)
* Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
* Living in emergency or transitional shelters
* Abandoned in hospitals
* 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 accommodations for human beings.

Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstance described above.

The term unaccompanied youth includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing and children, youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as “throwaway” children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available.

The school of origin is the school that the child our youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN

## Purpose of the Program

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. The program will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academic and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non homeless students.

The program provides procedural guidelines to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrollment. Homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, will be enrolled immediately pending obtainment of the necessary documents. The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining proper documentation.

The homeless education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the school of origin and providing them with transportation to and from the school of origin. Provisions are made for parents, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to decline enrollment in the school of origin.

The program provides for homeless liaison that will ensure program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, are provided the opportunity for academic success.

## Identification and Registration Procedures

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The district will conduct training sessions with the appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without using stigmatizing terminology. The district will use a Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A) to facilitate identity of homeless children and youth and preschoolers. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will complete the Residency Questionnaire at the time of registration. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the Residency Questionnaire must be submitted to the Russellville City Schools Homeless liaison on the day of registration. The school will maintain the original form in a file separate from the student’s permanent record for audit purposed during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor’s office.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth with or without proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record or school records. The school counselor or principal’s designee will provide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the necessary records and documents for enrollment. Enrollment without the required immunization record will be pending receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation. The existing method of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll himself or herself. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the Russellville City Schools Homeless Liaison to report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in language that the student understands. The Russellville City Schools Homeless Liaison (Appendix B) will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services.

The application process for free and reduced priced meals can be expedited for homeless children and youth. The determination for free meals may be made without completing the full application process.

## Identification of Homeless Preschoolers

The Russellville City Schools Homeless Liaison will collaborate with local community service agencies (e.g. Head Start, Department of Human Resources, Health Department, faith-based organizations and the court system, etc) and school personnel to identify homeless preschoolers. The district will also include homeless preschoolers and homeless children in the “Child Find” process as required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

## School Placement

The school system will make school placement decisions in the ‘best interest” of the homeless child or youth, Students will continue in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year, Students may enroll in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

If school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth’s parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a School Enrollment Dispute (Appendix C) with the school in which the student is presently enrolled The principal of this school will notify the Russellville City School Homeless Liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The Russellville City Schools Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute (See Appendix D). If the dispute cannot be settled by the homeless liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from an appropriate service agency.

# Appendix A Student Residency Form

This form is intended to address the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act (Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act). The question below is to assist in determining if the student meets the eligibility criteria for services provided under the McKinney-Vento Act. In the event that the child is not staying with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s), use the caregiver authorization form to address guardianship issues.

Where does the student stay at night?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| \_\_\_\_\_ in a shelter  | \_\_\_\_\_ in another location that is not appropriate for people(e.g., an abandoned building)  |
|  \_\_\_\_\_ in a motel/hotel  | \_\_\_\_\_ temporarily with more than one family in a house, mobile home, or apartment (because the family does not have a place of its own)  |
| \_\_\_\_\_ in a car  |  \_\_\_\_\_ other (in an arrangement that is not fixed, regular, and adequate and is not described by the other choices)  |

\_\_\_\_\_ at a campsite

Name of School:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Student’s date of birth:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I, (name) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

declare as follows:

I am the parent/legal guardian of (name of student) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

who is of school age and is seeking enrollment in (name of school district)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.Since (date) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, our family

has not had a permanent residence.

Under penalty of perjury under the laws of this state, I declare that the information provided here is true and correct and of my own personal knowledge and that, if called upon to testify, I would be competent to do so.

Name of person completing the form: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_E-mail address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I can be reached for emergencies at: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B

Local liaisons must ensure that:

* Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
* Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the LEA;
* Homeless children and youth and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the LEA, and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services;
* Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
* Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services;
* Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act; and
* Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated to locations where they receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act.

In meeting these responsibilities, local liaisons must assist homeless children and youth with such activities as the following:

* Enrolling in school and accessing school services;
* Obtaining immunizations or medical records;
* Informing parents, school personnel, and others of the rights of homeless children and youth;
* Working with school staff to make sure that homeless children and youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement;
* Helping to coordinate transportation services for homeless children and youth; and
* Collaborating and coordinating with State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and community and school personnel responsible for providing education and related support services to homeless children and youth.

**Appendix C:**

**Russellville City Schools Homeless Dispute Resolution Policy**

**Disputes**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending. The school where the dispute arises will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer the parent or youth to the local liaison immediately. The local liaison will ensure that the student is enrolled in the requested school and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and will resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth will be given every opportunity to

participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The local liaison will keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition repeatedly.

The parent, unaccompanied youth, or school district may appeal the school district’s decision as provided in the state’s dispute resolution process.

**Russellville City Schools Homeless Policy**

**Appeal Process**

**Oral Complaint**

In the event that an unaccompanied student or the parent or guardian of a student (hereinafter referred to as the Complainant) disagrees with a school’s decision regarding the student’s eligibility to attend the school, the Complainant shall orally present his position to the division’s homeless liaison.

**Written Complaint**

If the disagreement is not resolved within five (5) school days, the Complainant may present a written complaint to the homeless liaison. The written complaint must include the following information: the date the complaint is given to the homeless liaison; a summary of the events surrounding the dispute; the name(s) of the school division personnel involved in the enrollment decision; and the result of the presentation of the oral complaint to the homeless liaison. Within five (5) school days after receiving the written complaint, the homeless liaison will reach a decision regarding the contested enrollment and shall provide a written statement of that decision, including the reasons therefore, to the Complainant. The liaison will inform the Superintendent of the formal complaint and its resolution.

**Appeal to Superintendent**

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the written decision of the homeless liaison, the

Complainant may appeal that decision to the Superintendent by filing a written appeal. The homeless liaison shall ensure that the Superintendent receives copies of the written complaint and the response thereto. The Superintendent or designee shall schedule a conference with the Complainant to discuss the complaint. Within five (5) school days of receiving the written appeal, the Superintendent, or designee, shall provide a written decision to the Complainant including a statement of the reasons therefore. The superintendent's written finding shall include a statement regarding the right to file an appeal with the Alabama State Department of Education.

**Appeal to the ALSDE State Superintendent**

Complaints to the Alabama State Department of Education shall be in writing and signed by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied student and mailed or delivered to:

State Homeless Coordinator

Alabama State Department of Education 5348 Gordon Persons Building

50 North Ripley Street

Montgomery, Alabama 36104-2101

The State Homeless Coordinator will inform the involved school district(s) of the compliant. The Coordinator will gather needed information and statements of the parties involved and may conduct an independent investigation through an on-site visit if necessary.

The State Homeless Coordinator, in consultation with other state officials, will tender a written decision and inform the interested parties within ten (10) business days of receipt of the appeal.