

## Definitions

Children and youth who are identified as meeting the Federal definition of "homeless" will be provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the same manner as all other students of Odyssey Charter School, Inc. LEA (including a public preschool education). To that end, homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The LEA shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness. The LEA shall regularly review and revise its policies, including school discipline policies that impact homeless students, including those who may be a member of any of the protected classes.

Homeless children and youth, including “certified homeless youth” under State law, are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and include children and youth who meet any of the following criteria:

- A. share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing and economic hardship
- B. live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- C. live in emergency or transitional shelters
- D. are abandoned in hospitals
- E. 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, or
- F. live in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, an unaccompanied youth includes a homeless child or youth and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian under the age of 21. Under State law an unaccompanied homeless youth who is sixteen (16) years of age or older and found to be an unaccompanied homeless youth eligible for services under Federal law shall be issued a certificate by the LEA's Liaison for Homeless Children on LEA letterhead documenting his/her status which is to be accepted by medical providers and the courts.

Additionally, pursuant to Federal and State law, children or youth who are experiencing homelessness also include migratory children who are living in circumstances described in A-F above.

## Services to Homeless Children and Youth

The LEA will provide services to homeless students that are comparable to other students in the LEA, including:

- A. transportation services that support continued enrollment in the school of origin;
- B. public preschool programs and other educational programs and services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including:

1. programs for children with disabilities
2. programs for English Language Learners (ELLs);
3. programs in career and technical education;
4. programs for gifted and talented students;
5. school nutrition programs; and
6. before - and after-school programs.

Unaccompanied homeless high school youth will receive counseling to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education.

### **Liaison Responsibilities**

The School Principals will appoint a Liaison for Homeless Children who will perform the duties as assigned by the Board President or Designee. Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth as well as with community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.

The liaison will coordinate LEA operations and services so that homeless children/youth are immediately enrolled in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools of the LEA as required and receive credit for full or partial schoolwork (when the State develops guidelines regarding how to do so).

The Liaison will participate in at least two training courses provided or recommended by the Florida Department of Education each school year. The LEA will identify LEA and school personnel who must participate in training provided by the Liaison. Such training must include the importance of identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness, the identification of such students, and actions to take if staff suspect a student is experiencing homelessness. In identifying personnel who must be trained, the LEA must consider principals and other school leaders, school-level homeless student contacts, attendance officers, enrollment personnel, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, school counselors, teachers, and others that have direct contact with students. The LEA must maintain documentation of liaison training and provide it to the Florida Department of Education upon request pursuant to Rule 6A-10.088 Florida Administrative Code.

### **School Stability**

Maintaining a stable school environment is crucial to a homeless student's success in school. To ensure stability, the LEA must make school placement determinations based on the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth based on student-centered factors. The LEA must:

- A. continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year even if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
- B. enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth, or the family of the child or youth, is actually living are eligible to attend.

When determining a child or youth's best interest, the LEA must assume that keeping the homeless student in the school of origin is in that student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or the student if he or she is an unaccompanied youth. The school of origin is the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school at which the student was last enrolled, including a public preschool. The school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next level, when the student completes the final grade level at the school of origin.

When determining the student's best interest, the LEA must also consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless students and give priority to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or youth (if an unaccompanied youth). The LEA also considers the school placement of siblings when making this determination.

If the LEA finds that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth, the LEA must provide the individual with a written explanation and reason for the determination in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. This written explanation will include appeal rights and be provided in a timely manner.

### **Immediate Enrollment**

The LEA has an obligation to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students. Enroll and enrollment include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. If a school other than the student's school of origin is chosen on the basis of a best interest determination, the homeless student must be immediately enrolled, even if the student does not have the documentation typically necessary for enrollment, such as immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, birth certificate, or previous academic records. The homeless student must also be enrolled immediately regardless of whether the student missed application or enrollment deadlines during the period of homelessness, fails to meet uniform or dress code requirements, or has outstanding fines or fees. Students must be provided appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by homeless children and youth while attending a prior school.

The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the homeless student to obtain relevant academic or other records. If the student needs immunization or other health records, the enrolling school must immediately refer the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth to the Liaison and/or school nurse, who will help obtain the immunizations, screenings or other required health records. Records usually maintained by the school must be kept so that they are available in a timely fashion if the child enters a new school or LEA. These records include immunization or other required health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs. Procedures for inter-State records transfer between schools should be taken into account in order to facilitate immediate enrollment.

In addition, it shall be the LEA's responsibility to make sure that, once identified for services, the homeless student is attending classes and not facing barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities for which they meet relevant eligibility criteria, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs.

### **Transportation**

The LEA shall promptly provide homeless students with transportation services that are comparable to those available to non-homeless students. At the request of the parent or guardian, or the liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the LEA shall provide, or arrange for, transportation to and from the student's school of origin.

- A. If the homeless student continues to live in the LEA, transportation shall be provided, or the LEA shall arrange for the student's transportation, to/from his/her school of origin.
- B. If the homeless student resides in another school LEA, but the best interest determination is that the student should continue his/her education at the school of origin in the LEA, the LEA and the school LEA in which the student now resides shall agree upon a method to equitably apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin.

If there is not agreement, the LEA shall assume responsibility to transport the student from the LEA of residence to the school of origin in the LEA. Since Federal law requires that the responsibility and costs to be shared equally, the LEA of residence shall be invoiced for their share of the cost for transportation.

- C. If the homeless student resides in the LEA, but the best interest determination is that the student should continue his/her education at the school of origin in another LEA, the LEA and the school LEA in which the student's school of origin is located shall agree upon a method to equitably apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin.

If there not agreement, the LEA shall assume responsibility to transport the student to the school of origin in the other LEA. Since Federal law requires the responsibility and costs for transportation services to be shared equally, the LEA in which the school of origin is located shall be invoiced for their share of the cost for transportation.

- D. When the student obtains permanent housing, transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin until the end of the school year.

The mode of transportation shall be determined by the Liaison, in consultation with the parent or guardian, and shall be based on the best interest of the student.

In accordance with Federal law, the above transportation requirements still apply during the resolution of any dispute. The LEA will work with the State to resolve transportation disputes with other LEAs. Until the LEAs reach agreement, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally costs for transportation are to be shared equally.

If the disputing LEA is in another State, the LEA will turn to the State for assistance as Federal guidance says that both states should try to arrange an agreement for the LEAs.

### **Dispute Resolution**

Homeless families and youths have the right to challenge placement and enrollment decisions. If a dispute arises between a school and a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment of a homeless student, the LEA must follow its dispute resolution procedures, consistent with the State's procedures. If such a dispute occurs, the LEA will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution of the dispute, including all appeals. The student will receive all services for which they are eligible until all disputes and appeals are resolved.

Pursuant to Federal and State law, State Board rule, and this policy, the LEA will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of all decisions regarding school selection and enrollment made by the LEA, along with a written explanation of appeal rights.

The LEA's notice and written explanation about the reason for its decision will include, at a minimum, an explanation of how the school reached its decision regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, including the following:

- A. a description of the proposed or refused action by the school;
- B. an explanation of why the action is proposed or refused;
- C. a description of other options the school considered and why those options were rejected;
- D. a description of any other relevant factors to the school's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination such as the facts, witnesses, and evidence relied upon and their sources; and
- E. an appropriate timeline to ensure deadlines are not missed.

The LEA's notice and written explanation shall include contact information for the Liaison and the State Coordinator, and a brief description of the roles of each. The LEA's notice and written explanation shall also inform the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth that the Liaison is responsible for providing information describing the State-level dispute resolution process and distributing the appropriate forms to all parties wanting to file an appeal.

To initiate the State-level appeals process, within ten (10) working days after receiving written notification of the LEA-level or inter-LEA decision, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth may file an appeal with the Liaison, who must provide it to FLDOE. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Liaison is required to notify FLDOE of the State-level appeal and provide that appeal to the FLDOE. The local liaison also must log incidents of State-level appeals in the FLDOE Online Dispute Resolution Tracking System.

The FLDOE and the Commissioner of Education will render a decision on any appeal and provide a copy of such decision to the parties.

All decisions and notices shall be drafted in a language and format appropriate for low-literacy, limited-vision readers, and individuals with disabilities.

For children and youth and/or parents or guardians who are English learners or whose dominant language is not English, the LEA will provide translation and interpretation services in connection with all phases of the dispute resolution process pursuant to federal laws.

The LEA will also provide electronic notices via email if the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth has access to email followed by a written notice provided in person or sent by mail.

### **Homeless Children in Preschool**

Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs, including Head Start programs, administered by the LEA. Additionally, the homeless child must remain in the public preschool of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. When making such a decision on the student's best interest, the LEA takes into account the same factors as it does for any student, regardless of age. It also considers pre-school age-specific factors, such as 1) the child's attachment to preschool teachers and staff; 2) the impact of school climate on the child, including school safety; the quality and availability of services to meet the child's needs, including health, developmental, and social-emotional needs; and 3) travel time to and from school.

The LEA must also provide transportation services to the school of origin for a homeless child attending preschool. It is the LEA's responsibility to provide the child with transportation to the school of origin even if the homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool in the LEA moves to another LEA that does not provide widely available or universal preschool.

### **Public Notice**

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth of the applicable rights described above, the LEA shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness in each school. In addition, the LEA shall post public notice of the McKinney-Vento rights in places that homeless populations frequent, such as shelters, soup kitchens, and libraries in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians and unaccompanied youths.

### **Records**

The local liaison will assist the homeless students and their parent(s) or guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school.

All records for homeless students shall be maintained, subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Policy 8330, and in such a manner so that they are available in a timely fashion and can be transferred promptly to the appropriate parties, as required. Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, information regarding a homeless student's living situation is not considered directory information, is held confidential, and must be provided the same protections as other non-directory personally identifiable information (PII) contained in student education records under FERPA. The LEA shall incorporate practices to protect student privacy as described in AP 5111.01, AP 8330, and in accordance with the provisions of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).

No Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

### **Student Questionnaire**

The LEA must create a student housing questionnaire in compliance with Rule 6A-10.088 Florida Administrative Code. The questionnaire must be provided to parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youths at least once annually and whenever there is evidence that a student may be experiencing homelessness throughout the school year. The student housing questionnaire must be included in the annual school enrollment packet and may be distributed or returned electronically, but it must be available in hard copy, if requested.

### **Reporting**

By August 1 of each year the LEA must submit the Florida McKinney-Vento Program District Contact Directory and Listserve in compliance with Rule 6A-10.088 Florida Administrative Code.



# Student Housing Questionnaire

**SCHOOL Data Entry:**

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

Code: R \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire is intended to address the requirements of Every Student Succeeds Act: Title IX/Part A. The answers to questions below will assist us in determining if your student may qualify for additional educational support services.

**PLEASE PRINT VERY CLEARLY, COMPLETE ONE FORM PER FAMILY, and return the questionnaire to your school's main office. ¿Habla Ud. Español? Por favor doble este papel al otro lado para llenar este estudio.**

1. How many other children/youths are in your household (even if not enrolled in school)? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Names of Students Enrolled in School (PK–grade 12) or not enrolled in school, including those ages 1-4 (If needed, use an additional sheet of paper.)

a. Name of Student to be Enrolled:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
First Name	MI	Last Name	Birth Date	Grade	School

b. Other Children/Youth in Your Household (even if not enrolled in school):

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
First Name	MI	Last Name	Birth Date	Grade	School

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
First Name	MI	Last Name	Birth Date	Grade	School

3. Parent's, Guardian's, or Unaccompanied Youth's Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

a. Street Address (Location of House): \_\_\_\_\_

b. Length of time at this Address: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Former Address: \_\_\_\_\_

d. Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

e. Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**The undersigned certifies that the information provided is accurate.**

**Parent's, Guardian's, or Unaccompanied Youth's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. Place an "X" in the appropriate box to answer "Yes" or "No".

NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE	YES	NO	CODE
1. My family lives in an emergency or transitional shelter (e.g., FEMA Trailer).			A
2. My family shares the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; doubled-up.			B
3. My family lives in a car, park, temporary trailer park or campground due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings or similar settings.			D
4. My family lives in a hotel or motel due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.			E
5. A child/youth in my home is under the age of 16 and unaccompanied (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) or I am an unaccompanied youth under the age of 16 years.			
6. A child/youth in my home is 16 years of age or older and an unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) or I am an unaccompanied youth 16 years of age or older.			

5. If you marked "Yes" to any questions above, please indicate the cause by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

Man-made Disaster (Major) (D)

Earthquake (E)

Flooding (F)

Hurricane (H)

Mortgage Foreclosure (M)

Other Homelessness Causes (N)

Pandemic (Major) (P)

Tropical Storm (S)

Tornado (T)

Unknown (U)

Wildfire (W)

If you answered "Yes" to some or all of the questions above, an educational representative may contact you to find out whether your child is or you, as an unaccompanied youth, are eligible for additional educational services.

Directions for school staff: For students with positive responses to questions 1-6, complete school data entry box to indicate data entry has been completed, make a copy of the form for your records, and then return surveys with any positive responses to: McKinney-Vento Liaison at \_\_\_\_\_.