

PANAMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

Definition

The federal definition of homelessness used by all public schools in the United States includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition specifically includes children and youth living in shelters, transitional housing, cars, campgrounds, motels, and sharing the housing of others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons. This is the same definition of homelessness used by Head Start, special education, child nutrition, and other federal family and youth programs.

The Rights of Homeless Students

Students who meet the definition of "Homeless" and are identified or identify themselves as such have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education;
- Enroll in school immediately, even if they lack documents normally required for enrollment (i.e. birth certificates, transcripts, vaccinations, etc.);
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school works with the family/student to gather the needed documents;
- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending the school they last attended, if that is their preference and is possible. If the district believes that the school chosen is not in the student's best interest, a written explanation will be provided and the student has the right to appeal this decision;
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested; and,
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to the student's needs.

Identification

At PPS, students are primarily identified at enrollment or through the school Counselor. Families or students who believe that they are homeless, should identify themselves as such to the school Counselor.

Dispute Process

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the established district dispute process shall be followed [Policy 4004(IV)(C)]. Children have the right of enrollment until such time as there is a final resolution to the dispute.

Parents/Guardians/Students who feel that their request to enroll has been incorrectly denied or wish to contest their child's placement should be encouraged to contact the Director of Federal Programs for consultation. If the dispute is not resolved at this stage, they will be asked to submit their case in writing followed by the remainder of the steps outlined in Policy 4004(IV)(C).

Should the final result of the district dispute process be unsatisfactory to the parent/guardian/student, they may appeal the district's final decision by contacting the State Homeless Liaison at the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

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Homeless Liaison

Panama Public School is required to identify a person to act as a Homeless Liaison. This person's duties involve training school staff in identification procedures, serving as an advocate for homeless students, arranging for services and arbitrating disputes that may arise.

Panama Public Schools Homeless Liaison is Stephanie Diamond, counselor. Contact information 918 963-0402.
