



Policy: Homeless Students Policy/McKinney-Vento Act

Updated/Adopted: January 13, 2021

Northwood Academy Charter School (“Northwood”) agrees to implement the following policy to ensure that all children and youth who are homeless receive a free appropriate public education and are given opportunity to succeed in school, consistent with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for accessing federal categorical funding.

Northwood shall make reasonable efforts to identify children experiencing homelessness, encourage their enrollment, and eliminate existing barriers to their attendance and education. Northwood will ensure that children and youth who are homeless are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment.

Information regarding the McKinney Vento Act, including the educational rights of children and youth identified as homeless is included in our Student/Parent Handbook and is also distributed in our weekly Bulldog Blast newsletter.

Definition of Homelessness

Children and youth experiencing homelessness means children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education and who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- 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, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting placement in foster care.
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- Children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting.
- Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

A child or youth will be considered to be homeless for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

Identification

Children and youth who qualify as homeless in Northwood will be identified.

Data will be collected on the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Northwood; where they are living; their academic achievement (including state and local assessments); and the reasons for any enrollment delays or interruptions in their education.

Enrollment

Each child and youth enrolled at Northwood identified as homeless has the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents
- Enroll in a local school or continue attending Northwood, if that is their preference and is feasible.
- Receive transportation to and from Northwood, if requested. Said transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth attends Northwood, including during pending disputes.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to their needs as a student

Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency
- Transcripts/school records (Northwood must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent, and previous schools or teachers.)
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (If necessary, Northwood must refer students to the local liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records.)
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of clothing that conforms to dress code
- Any factor related to the student's living situation

Unaccompanied youth must be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, guardian, older sibling, or local liaison.

Services

Children and youth experiencing homelessness will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students at Northwood, which may include:

- Transportation
- Title I, Part A services - Children and youth identified as homeless are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners
- Vocational and technical education programs
- After-school programs
- Free meals - On the day a child or youth identified as homeless enrolls in school, Northwood must submit the student's name to its food service program coordinator for immediate eligibility.

When applying any standing policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused.

Disputes

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth experiencing homelessness will be admitted immediately to Northwood pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student who is homeless to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending.

Delegation of Responsibility

Northwood designates our Lower School Counselor to serve as Northwood's Liaison for homeless students and families.

Northwood's Liaison has the following responsibilities:

- Identify homeless children and youth
- Inform parents/guardians of educational rights and related opportunities available to their children, and provide them with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children
- Disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where children and youth receive services under the Act and forms to such places as schools, family shelters, and food pantries
- Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with the Enrollment Dispute section and ensure immediate enrollment pending resolution of disputes
- Inform the parent/guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, of all transportation options, including to the school of origin, and assist in accessing these transportation services
- Assist children and youth who do not have immunizations or immunization or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations or immunization or medical records
- Understand the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidance issues for the education of homeless students in order to distribute information on the subject as well as to present workshops for school personnel, including office staff.

Northwood's Liaison shall coordinate with:

- Local service agencies that provide services to homeless children, youth, and families.
- School districts on issues of records transfer, per pupil allocation, transportation, and special education programs to ensure that homeless children who are in need of special education and related services are located, identified, and evaluated.
- State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

Coordination will include conducting outreach and training through these agencies. Both public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the Northwood's Liaison and Northwood in implementing this policy.