



Monroe City Schools Educational Plan for Transitional Students

Homelessness exists in our community. A combination of high housing costs and poverty causes many families to lose their housing. Many young people leave their homes due to abuse, neglect and family conflict. Children and youth have lost their housing and live in a variety of places, including motels, shelters, shared residences, transitional housing programs, cars, campgrounds, and others. Their lack of permanent housing can lead to potentially serious physical, emotional, and mental consequences. Monroe City Schools will strive to ensure that all children and youth receive a free and appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our schools.

It is the policy of our district to view children as individuals. Therefore, this plan will not refer to children as homeless; it will instead use the term *children and youth in transition*. There shall be no barriers to enrollment, transportation, attendance, and success in schools for children and youth in transition.

Information regarding this policy will be posted in every school in the districts as well as other places where children, youth, and families in transition receive services, including family and youth shelters, recreation centers, libraries, health departments, and other social service agencies.

Definitions:

Children and youth in transition means children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, or adequate night-time residence, including:

- children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- children living in motels, hotels, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- children living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- children and youth who have 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 living in a car, 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 will be considered in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above.

Enroll and enrollment means attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

Immediate means without delay.

Parent means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

School of origin means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Homeless liaison is the staff person designated by our district responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the local education liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Identification:

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison will identify children and youth in transition in the school district. The local liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the local liaison. The local liaison will also inform secretaries to inquire about possible homelessness upon enrollment of students and to forward information to the district's homeless liaison. The local liaison will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition in the district, where they are living; their academic achievement, and reasons for any enrollment delays.

School Selection:

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that in the area in which they live those non transitional students are eligible to attend. Marinating a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and our school district. Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools of origin at the parent's request, if it's in the best interest of the child, or to the extent feasible. Students may remain at their school of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of the school year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years. Feasibility will be child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth's wishes. Potential feasibility considerations include:

- the age of the child or youth
- the distance of a commute and the impact it may have on the student's education
- personal safety issues

- a student's need for special instruction (e.g. special education and related services)
- the length of anticipated stay or temporary shelter or temporary location
- the time remaining in the school year

Enrollment:

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have school enrollment documents available readily. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment must enroll any child or youth in transition immediately. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- proof of residency
- birth certificate
- any other document requirements
- unpaid school fees
- lack of uniform or clothing that conforms to dress code
- any factor related to the student's living condition.

Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or homeless liaison.

Transportation:

Without appropriate transportation, a student may not be able to continue attending his or her school of origin. To avoid such school transfers, at a parent's request, transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for a child or youth in transition. Transportation will be provided the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during pending disputes. The local liaison will request transportation to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied youth. The length of the commute will be considered only in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the student. Parents and unaccompanied youth must be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Services:

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including:

- transportation (as described above)
- Title I, Part A services (as described below)
- 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
- Gifted and talented programs
- Before and after-school programs.

When applying any district policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation will be excused. MCSD will follow state procedures to ensure that youth in transition re identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services.

School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education.

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 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 receive 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 are delaying or denying the enrollment of the 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 process.

Free Meals:

Hunger and poor nutrition are barriers to learning. To help ensure that children and youth in transition are available for learning, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in a school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the district nutrition officer for immediate processing.

Training:

The local liaison will conduct training activities for school staff at least once a year. The trainings and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with policy, and increase sensitivity to children and youth experiencing transition.

Coordination:

The liaison will coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other organizations and agencies.

Preschool:

Preschool education is a very important element of later academic success. Children of transition have experienced many difficulties accessing preschool opportunities. To facilitate preschool enrollment and attendance, the provisions of this policy will apply to preschools administered by MCSD.

References:

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 11431-11436

Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 63111-6315