

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in January 2002, the Lee County Board of Education is committed to assuring the educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

**Definition**

According to this act, the definition of homeless children and youth means an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. These definitions also include children and youth who are living with a friend, relative or someone else because they lost their home or can't afford housing; children and youth who are staying in a motel or hotel due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations; children and youth who are living in an emergency or transitional shelter or a domestic violence shelter, and many other situations.

**Academic Achievement**

It is the policy of Congress that students in homeless situations should have access to the education and other services they need to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

Homeless Liaison will ensure that:

- Children and youth in homeless situations are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- Children and youth enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of Lee County;
- Families, children, and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and pre-school programs administered by Lee County Board of Education, and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services;
- Parents or guardians 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;
- Public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services under the Act (such as schools, family shelters, and etc):
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the Enrollment Disputes section;
- Parents and guardians, and unaccompanied youth, are fully informed of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services; and

- Collaboration and coordination with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to children and youth in homeless situations.

### **School Selection**

Lee County School System will, to the extent feasible, keep students in homeless situations in their school of origin (defined as the school attended when permanently housed, or the school in which they were last enrolled), unless it is against the parent or guardian's wishes.

Students can stay in their school of origin the entire time they are homeless, and until the end of the academic year in which they move into permanent housing.

If a student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by a parent/guardian, the Lee County School System must provide a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal, whether or not the parent/guardian disputes the placement.

Homeless appointed liaisons will help unaccompanied youth (youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes, and provide youth with notice of their right to appeal an enrollment choice that goes against their wishes.

### **Enrollment**

Lee County School System will immediately enroll students in homeless situations, even if they do not have required documents, such as school records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documents. The term "enroll" is defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school, and students must be enrolled in school while records are obtained. If a student does not have immunizations or immunization or medical records, the liaison must immediately assist in obtaining them, and the student must be enrolled in school in the interim.

### **Dispute Resolution**

- Whenever a dispute arises, the student must be immediately admitted to the school of choice while the dispute is being resolved.
- A written explanation of the school's decision must be provided if a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth disputes a school placement or enrollment decision.
- The school must refer the student, parent or guardian to the local liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
- Liaisons must ensure that this provision is followed for unaccompanied youth.

## **Transportation**

At a parent or guardian's request, homeless students will be provided with transportation to and from their school of origin. For unaccompanied youth, transportation to and from the school of origin must be provided at the liaison's request. If the student's temporary residence and the school of origin are in the same school zone, then Lee County School System must provide transportation. If the student is living outside the school of origin's LEA, the LEA where the student is living and the school of origin's LEA must determine how to divide the responsibility and cost of providing transportation, or they must share the responsibility and cost equally.

In addition to providing transportation to the school of origin, LEAs must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.