

Hugo Public Schools

Homeless Education Plan

Revised December 5, 2019

The Hugo Public School District welcomes all school age children living in our district to enroll in our schools regardless of their residential status. We actively encourage families of school age children who are homeless as well as those individuals under 18 living on their own in homeless situations to enroll in our schools. We are here to help provide educational services in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act.

The Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) (McKinney-Vento Act). More information about the Act as well as additional resources can be found at <http://nche.ed.gov>. The Oklahoma State Department of Education also provides resources to educators at <https://sde.ok.gov/title-x-part-c>.

Title I Set-Aside funds are used to engage with families of school age children and school age children living on their own in homeless situations. Information is posted on our website at www.hugoschools.com. Informational posters are posted in various places including My Brother's Place, Choctaw County Youth Services, Hugo Boys and Girls Club, and the Grant Water Department as well as other locations within our district.

Homeless students enrolled in the district will not be separated from the mainstream school environment and will be afforded all opportunities and protections including FERPA protections. We are committed to removing barriers of homeless students' access to academic and extracurricular activities as well as removing the stigma of homelessness.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youths as individuals who lack a fixed, or regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- Children and youths who are:
 - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as "double up");
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters; or
 - Abandoned in hospitals;

- Children and youths who 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;
- Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Identification of Homeless Children and Youths

The following strategies and activities are used to ensure that all students experiencing homelessness are identified:

- **Housing Questionnaire.** This document is used to gather information about students at the time of enrollment. Universal implementation of the questionnaire prevents stigmatization of students and reduces the defensiveness in adult caregivers by preventing students and families from feeling singled out. We use the Enrollment Questionnaire provided by the Oklahoma State Department of Education at <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/Homesless%20Enrollment%20Form%208-2017.pdf> to identify eligible students.
- **Referrals.** Ensuring that referral of homeless students is an easy process.
- **Local Liaison Contact Information.** The local liaison's contact information is posted on the district website as well as posters placed in various locations within our district.
- **Language Access.** Materials for students and parents are provided in a language easily understood by families and students. If students or their families are unable to read, additional support is provided to explain student rights.
- **Ongoing Outreach and Training for School Staff.** Providing professional development and training for school staff, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and school support staff, at least once annually that focuses on the definition, identification, and services for homeless students and youths, including how to connect with other service providers.
- **Interagency Collaboration.** We collaborate with various community groups and agencies including Choctaw County Youth Services, the Hugo Boys and Girls Club, the Hugo Police Department, the Choctaw County Sheriff's Department, the City of Hugo, The Hugo Area Chamber of Commerce, and My Brother's Place.

Rights of Eligible Children and Youth

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, eligible children and youth have the right to:

- Attend their school of origin, if this is in the student's best interest, or the local attendance area school. The school of origin is the school the student attended before losing housing or the school the student last attended. We use the Best Interest Determination form provided by the Oklahoma State Department of Education to determine a student's best interest found at <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/BEST%20INTEREST%20DETERMINATION%20FORM.pdf>.
- Enroll in the new local school immediately, even if lacking documentation normally required for enrollment, such as previous school records, immunization for medical records, birth certificate, proof of residency, or proof of guardianship, or other documents.
- Have access to the same programs and services that are available to all other students, including transportation, before and after school programs, counseling services, Title I programs, special education services if the child has a disability, Bilingual, Vocational, Gifted and Talented programs, and to participate in the district's community eligibility for free breakfast and lunch.

Homeless Education Liaison

The Hugo Public Schools District will assign one person to serve as a Homeless Education Liaison, or Point of Contact (POC). The district shall submit this person's name to the OSDE, through the online Grants Management System. The Homeless Education Liaison will work in the best interest of the children to ensure that all educational requirements are being satisfied. The liaison will meet with the site administration, school counselors, classroom teachers, parents, and other agency personnel as necessary. The liaison will have access to available trainings and to other resources necessary to stay informed of any changes in the Homeless Education Regulations.

The McKinney-Vento Act lists the responsibilities of the local liaison. The law states that the local liaisons will ensure that

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies;
- Homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, school;
- Homeless families, children, and youths have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start programs, early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA;

- Homeless families, children, and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
- The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the 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 homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and forum understandable to parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth;
- Enrollment disputes are mediated according to 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E);
- The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied homeless youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school or origin;
- School personnel who serve homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support;
- Unaccompanied homeless youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards established for other students, and are informed of their status as independent students and assisted to receive verification of their status for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

School Selection

In determining the best interest of the child or youth, we:

- Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth. [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Section 722; TITLE 42 U.S.C. §11432(G)(3)(b)(i)]
- Consider student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth." [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Section 722; TITLE 42 U.S.C. §11432(G)(3)(b)(ii)]

If, after conducting the best interest determination, we determine that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth, a written explanation of the reasons will be provided.

Disputes

If a dispute arises regarding status as "homeless" or the best interest determination under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assurance Act, the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth may request a review by the superintendent pursuant to the procedures outlined in Policy FD-P.

Assurances

- Homeless students will not be separated from the mainstream school environment.
- Students will not be stigmatized on the basis of their homeless status.
- We will identify and remove barriers that prevent youths from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with state, local, and school policies.
- We will provide such school services that are comparable to services offered to other students in the district and that are deemed to be in the child's best interest. Such services include: special education, Title I, and limited English proficiency programs for which they are eligible; vocational education programs, gifted and talented programs; before and after school programs; school meal programs, and transportation services.
- Homeless students will have access to academic and extracurricular activities, including summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, on-line learning, if such programs are available at the state and local levels.

Confidentiality

The faculty and staff of Hugo Public Schools will treat information about a student's living situation as directory information. We will only share educational records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Parents are provided information about student directory information and the option to withdraw consent at the time of enrollment. We will maintain the confidentiality of information and protect the privacy of students and families.