



San Diego Unified School District

EUGENE BRUCKER EDUCATION CENTER
4100 Normal Street, San Diego, CA 92103-2682

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Regarding the Education of Homeless Students Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*

1. How do we inform the parents of homeless students about their rights under NCLB?

Please use the enclosed letter to notify parents of homeless students of this important information. As a homeless student is registered, a copy of the letter should be provided to the student and/or parent present.

2. How do the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and other related federal legislation define *homeless*?

According to federal law homeless children or youth are those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes children and youth who:

- live with a friend, relative or someone else because they lost their homes and cannot afford housing;
- live in a motel or hotel because they lack adequate alternative accommodations;
- live in emergency or transitional shelters, in domestic violence shelters or in other like settings or are awaiting foster care placement; or
- unescorted youth who are unsheltered.

3. What is the intention of NCLB and other related federal legislation regarding the education of homeless students?

The NCLB and other recent federal legislation seek to ensure educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Congress clearly intends that students living 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 academic achievement standards to which all students are held in each state.

4. What services must school districts offer homeless students?

Public school districts must ensure the following:

- That children and youth living in homeless situations enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the districts' schools.
- That homeless children and youth and their families receive the educational services for which they are eligible. These services include not only K–12 educational opportunities but also Head Start, Even Start and pre-school programs administered by the district, and referrals to health, mental health, dental and other appropriate services.
- That parents or guardians of homeless children and youth 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.
- Students enrolled and added as homeless are immediately certified for free breakfast and lunch.

- That parents and guardians of homeless children and youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin (see definition below), and are assisted in making use of the transportation services.

5. Which schools may homeless students attend?

It is the intent of the federal legislation as much as possible to keep homeless students in their *schools of origin*, that is, the schools they attended when permanently housed or in which they were last enrolled, unless doing so is against the parents' or guardians' wishes.

Homeless students:

- May stay in those schools the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year (including any extended year program for which they are eligible) in which they move into permanent housing, and
- Must be provided, at parent/guardian request, with transportation to and from school, as long as it is feasible.
- Parents or guardians of homeless students also may choose to enroll their children in any public school that students who live in the school attendance area of the homeless family's temporary residence are eligible to attend.

6. What if homeless students whose parents or guardians seek to enroll them in my school do not have the documents that are customarily required for enrollment?

Homeless students must be allowed to enroll in school, attend classes and participate fully in school activities even if they do not have all of the required school records, medical records and proof of residency. Personnel at the school of enrollment must work with the parents or guardians to obtain all required documents.

7. What if a homeless student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian seeks to enroll at my school?

Homeless students not in the physical custody of parents or guardians are called, for purposes of the law, *unaccompanied youth*. It is the responsibility of the school's principal, or a liaison designated by the principal, to ensure that all of the rights accorded to homeless students under the NCLB are explained to unaccompanied youth and enforced on their behalf.

8. What special residence code do I use to enroll a homeless student?

The following residential codes pertain to the enrollment of students living in homeless situations:

- Homelessness-hotel/motel
- Homelessness-doubling up (living with someone)
- Homelessness-sheltered
- Homelessness-unsheltered

9. Is there someone I may call if I have questions about enrolling students whose parents or guardians indicate they are homeless?

Yes, you may call the San Diego Unified School District at (619) 725-7326. Each school district is required by NCLB to establish a liaison for students in homeless situations. In San Diego Unified the liaison is Pam Hosmer. She may be contacted for any questions or needed support.

10. What if I have questions about providing transportation to homeless students?

Direct your questions about transportation to the district at (619) 725-7326. At a parent's or guardian's request, homeless students must be provided with transportation to and from their school of origin. The district liaison staff can provide information about the transportation services that are available and can explain how homeless students may gain access to them.

11. May I seek to place a student in another school, when I believe the alternative placement would be better for the student and the student's parents do not object?

There may be instances in which an alternative placement in a school other than a homeless student's school of origin or current neighborhood school may be beneficial to the student. The student, for example, may be overage and lacking sufficient credits. In that case placement in an alternative education program may be more appropriate for the student. Or the homeless student may require special education services not offered at the school of origin or neighborhood school. In such instances the reason(s) for the alternative placement, as well as the parent's/guardian's right of appeal, must be explained to the homeless student's parents/guardians both orally and in writing.

12. What if a dispute arises between parents or guardians seeking enrollment of their children under the provisions of the NCLB and school site personnel?

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 or guardian disputes a school placement or enrollment decision. The school must refer the student, parent or guardian to the district at (619) 725-7326 to carry out the dispute resolution process.