

## ADMISSION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE HOMELESS

The Alexandria City School Board is committed to educating children and youth who are homeless. Attendance in the Alexandria City Public Schools is free to school-age persons living with a parent, guardian, or person *in loco parentis* (person acting in place of a parent by assuming the responsibility for care and supervision of a child which a parent would ordinarily exercise) in a temporary shelter in the school division, not solely for school purposes. The school division will coordinate the identification and provision of services to such students with relevant local social services agencies and other agencies and programs providing services to such students and with other school divisions as may be necessary to resolve interdivisional issues.

The Alexandria City Public Schools will serve each student who is homeless according to the student's best interest and:

- continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness if the student becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or
- for the remainder of the academic year if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
- enroll the student in the same attendance-area public school as the student who is not homeless.

In determining the best interest of the student who is homeless, the Alexandria City Public Schools shall

- to the extent feasible, keep the student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student's parents or guardian;
- provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal as described below, to the parent or guardian of the student who is homeless, if the division sends the student to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian; and,
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the division's Homeless Liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions regarding the student, considers the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal described below.

### Enrollment

The school selected in accordance with this policy shall immediately enroll the student who is homeless, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation.

The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization, birth, or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the student to the division's Homeless Liaison, who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.

If the documentation regarding the comprehensive physical examination required by Policy JHCA Physical Examination of Students cannot be furnished for a homeless child or youth, and the person seeking to enroll the pupil furnishes to the school division an affidavit stating that the documentation cannot be provided because of homelessness of the child or youth and also indicating that, to the best of his or her knowledge, such pupil is in good health and free from any communicable or contagious disease, the school division shall immediately refer the student to the division's Homeless Liaison who shall, as soon as practicable, assist in obtaining the necessary physical examination by the county or city health department or other clinic or physician's office and shall immediately admit the pupil to school.

The decision regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the student lives with homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

### **Enrollment Disputes**

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in the school:

- the student who is homeless shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought and be provided all services for which he or she is eligible, pending resolution of the dispute;
- the parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision;
- the student, parent, guardian shall be referred to the division's Homeless Liaison who shall carry out the appeal process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

### **Appeal Process**

#### *Oral Complaint*

In the event that an unaccompanied student or the parent or guardian of a student (hereinafter referred to as the Complainant) disagrees with a school's decision regarding the student's eligibility to attend the school, the Complainant shall orally present his/her position to the division's Homeless Liaison.

#### *Written Complaint*

If the disagreement is not resolved within five (5) school days, the Complainant may present a written complaint to the Homeless Liaison. The written complaint must include the following information: the date the complaint is given to the Homeless Liaison; a summary of the events surrounding the dispute; the name(s) of the school division personnel involved in the enrollment decision; and the result of the presentation of the oral complaint to the Homeless Liaison. Within five (5) school days after receiving the written complaint, the Homeless Liaison will reach a decision regarding the contested enrollment and shall provide a written statement of that

decision, including the reasons therefore, to the complainant. The liaison will inform the Superintendent of the formal complaint and its resolution.

### **Appeal to Superintendent**

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the written decision of the Homeless Liaison, the Complainant may appeal that decision to the Superintendent by filing a written appeal. The Homeless Liaison shall ensure that the Superintendent receives copies of the written complaint and the response thereto. The Superintendent or designee shall schedule a conference with the Complainant to discuss the complaint. Within five (5) school days of receiving the written appeal, the Superintendent, or designee, shall provide a written decision to the complainant including a statement of the reasons therefore.

### **Comparable Services**

Each student who is homeless shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school attended by the student who is homeless including the following:

- transportation services
- educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title I, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;
- programs in vocational and technical education;
- programs for gifted and talented students; and
- school nutrition programs.

### **Transportation**

At the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Liaison), transportation will be provided for a student who is homeless to and from the school of origin as follows:

- if the homeless child or youth continues to live in the area served by the division in which the school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to and from school of origin shall be provided or arranged by the division in which the school of origin is located.
- if the homeless child's or youth's living arrangements in the area served by the division in which the school of origin is located terminate and the child or youth, though continuing his or her education in the school of origin, begins living in an area served by another division, the division of origin and the division in which the homeless child or youth is living shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the divisions are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.

## Definitions

The term “student who is homeless” means an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth, including unaccompanied youths who are not in the physical custody of their parents, who:

- are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or other causes; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; or in emergency, congregate, temporary, or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- 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; or
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or trains stations, or similar settings; and
- migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this policy because the children are living in circumstances described above.

The term “migratory child” means a child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker, or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, has moved from one school division to another in order to obtain, or accompany such parent or spouse in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing.

The term “school of origin” means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Adopted: December 5, 1996  
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Amended: October 5, 2000  
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Legal Refs.: 20 U.S.C. § 6399.  
42 U.S.C. §§ 11302, 11431, 11432, 11433.

Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, §§22.1-3, 22.1-70, 22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:1, 22.1-270.

Superintendent’s Memo No. 64 (Dec. 5, 2003)

Cross Refs.: JEC School Admission  
JHCA Physical Examinations of Students