

Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual

Title: EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Section: 702.5

Board Report: 96-1120-PO3

Date Adopted: November 20,
1996

Policy:

This policy is intended to reiterate the significant provisions of the Illinois Education For all Homeless Children Act as it applies to the Board of Education.

Every homeless child and youth shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate education and programs as is provided to other children and youth. No homeless child or youth shall be discriminated against, segregated from the mainstream school population, or isolated on the basis of his or her homelessness.

Individuals and Programs Covered

This policy applies to all Board employees and school personnel, and to all services, programs, and activities provided or made available by the Board, including but not limited to free lunch programs, before and after school programs, pre-kindergarten programs, school supplies and tutoring. If tutoring is not available at the school, a tutor will be furnished at the shelter upon request. For certain preschool programs, homeless children are given a priority and parents are encouraged to seek enrollment in these programs.

Notice

Semi-annually, in September and January, the Board will provide written notice to all students enrolled in the Chicago Public School(s) (CPS) and their parents containing information regarding the educational rights of homeless children and youth under this policy and under the law. Such notice will be kept on file at each school and will be posted in a prominent location within the school. Each CPS will also make the notice available to parents at each school during report card pick up at the end of each semester. Any questions or issues regarding this policy should be directed to:

Chicago Public Schools
Office of School Leadership and Development
1819 West Pershing Road
Chicago, Illinois 60609
Attention: Louisea Storey, Coordinator
Homeless Education Program
Tel.(773) 535-7091 Fax (773) 535-8257

Definitions

*"Homeless person, child or youth" includes but is not limited to any of the following:

- (1) An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime place of abode.
- (2) An individual who has a primary nighttime place of abode that is:
 - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing;
 - (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
 - (C) a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

*The Board shall use the U.S. Department of Education's Preliminary Guidance for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program definitions of "homeless", which shall accompany dissemination of this policy.

"School of Origin" means the school that the child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.

"Parent" means the parent or guardian having legal or physical custody of a child.

"Ombudsperson" means the Deputy Education Officer for the Chicago Public Schools. The Ombudsperson shall provide resource information and resolve disputes relating to the rights of homeless children under this policy. The Ombudsperson may appoint each Regional Education Officer to act as his or her designee.

Hardship for purposes of this policy means that:

1. The parent is employed or enrolled in and attending a bona fide job training or educational program which precludes him or her from transporting his or her child(ren) to/from school;

OR

2. The parent is mentally or physically disabled and such disability precludes him or her from transporting his or her child(ren) to/from school;

OR

3. The parent is responsible for transporting his or her children to schools at different locations;

OR

4. The parent resides in a shelter or similar facility which will not permit the parent to leave to transport the child to/from school;

OR

5. The parent is required by court order, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or a DCFS contract agency to engage in services which prohibit him or her from transporting the child to/from school.

OR

6. There is other good cause to find that a hardship exists which warrants the provision of alternative transportation;

AND

7. For each hardship defined in 1-6 above, the school may verify the information supporting such hardship. If the school is unable to verify the hardship, then the parent is required to execute an affidavit asserting the truth of the facts supporting the existence of hardship. Any parent determined to have provided false information for the purpose of securing alternative transportation under this policy may be denied such transportation.

Identification of Homeless Children and Youth

Each Chicago Public School that has a homeless shelter within its attendance boundary will identify a school employee to serve as the school's liaison to assist with identifying and enrolling homeless students in the school. The school's liaison will receive training from the Homeless Coordinator regarding the CPS Homeless Education Program, its policies and procedures. CPS is committed to increasing attendance of all students enrolled in schools within the District, homeless or otherwise. The CPS have in place a Student Attendance Improvement Plan which is designed to reduce absenteeism and truancy. Inasmuch as a student who is homeless has been identified as chronically absent or truant, each school must take appropriate action consistent with its Student Attendance Improvement Plan to serve the student.

Enrollment

1. No school shall deny enrollment to any child or youth because he or she is living in a shelter or lacks a permanent address or is homeless.

2. No school shall deny enrollment to or delay the enrollment or transfer of any homeless child or youth unable to produce school, medical, or residency records.

3. The Chicago Public Schools shall provide each homeless child and youth who enrolls in the district with the choice of enrolling in:

(a) the school he or she attended when permanently housed;

or

(b) the school in which he or she was last enrolled;

or

(c) any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

4. The child or youth shall be permitted to remain in the school selected in accordance with the choices identified above for as long as the child or youth remains homeless or if the child or youth becomes permanently housed, until the end of the academic year.

5. When a homeless student or youth attempts to enroll in a school and notifies the school that he or she is homeless and that he or she does not have appropriate transfer or medical documentation, it shall be the responsibility of the receiving school to immediately enroll the child and to immediately make a reasonable effort to:

- (a) verify that the student is homeless;
- (b) contact the sending school for proper transfer documentation; and if necessary
- (c) immediately refer the student to a physician or clinic including free clinics, which can provide any necessary examination or immunizations in a timely manner

6. In the event that a homeless child lacks immunizations(s), or documentation regarding immunization, the school shall immediately enroll the child, and shall refer him or her to a physician or clinic, including free clinics, which can provide any necessary immunizations in a timely manner.

Transportation

1. The Board shall ensure that transportation will be provided to every homeless child or youth who chooses to attend his or her school of origin within the District. Transportation assistance will be provided for as long as the child or youth attends the school of origin and remains homeless, or if the child becomes permanently housed, until the end of the academic year during which the housing is required. If a child or youth begins living in another school district or if the child's school of origin is in another school district then transportation services shall be provided to the extent required by law.

2. If a child or youth becomes homeless and chooses to remain in his or her school of origin, each school upon learning of the student's homelessness, must notify the student and parent of the availability of transportation services, if such services are necessary for the homeless child or youth to continue attendance at the school of origin.

3. Each school will provide student rate tokens and the application fee for a student fare card if necessary, on the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) to the child or youth and continue to provide such fare to enable the child or youth to go to and from school and school-related activities.

4. CPS will provide full rate tokens on the CTA to allow accompaniment by the parent or guardian of every child or youth who is enrolled in his or her school of origin and attending preschool, and kindergarten through sixth grade.

5. Tokens provided to a parent or guardian pursuant to this policy may only be used for the purpose of transporting the child to and from school. CPS may verify whether the fare provided to the parent or guardian is used for its intended purpose. Any parent or guardian who fails to accompany the child on a regular basis despite provision of these tokens shall be denied additional tokens unless such denial would preclude the child from attending the school of origin. Any parent or guardian denied tokens pursuant to this policy has a right to invoke the dispute resolution process described below.

6.

(a) In hardship situations, CPS will provide an alternative system by which homeless students enrolled in preschool and in kindergarten through sixth grades are provided transportation services. Alternative transportation services will be provided to the child or youth where public transportation would create a hardship as defined in this policy.

(b) Upon receipt of affidavit or verification of a hardship, arrangements for alternative transportation services should be immediately initiated by the school and made directly to the Coordinator of the Homeless Education Program. Alternative transportation will be provided as soon as possible, but will take no longer than two weeks to implement. A student may receive alternative transportation services due to hardship for no more than three locations in a school year.

(c) If a parent or guardian due to illness or hardship is temporarily unable to transport a child, the school shall accept a letter from the parent or guardian permitting a specified person to accompany the child and utilize the tokens otherwise provided to the parent or guardian for a two week period.

7. Each school providing tokens for public transportation services must complete the Homeless Student Information Form and the Homeless Transportation Forms to receive appropriate monies. Monies will be placed on the school's budget line for transportation services. All Forms must be submitted to the Coordinator of the Homeless Education Program. Failure to submit these forms does not relieve any school of the obligation to provide prompt transportation services in accordance with this policy.

8. Homeless students that receive transportation for any reason other than homelessness shall continue to be provided such transportation and, if eligible to begin receiving transportation for any reason other than homelessness (e.g. special education, attendance at a magnet school, overcrowding or the like) shall be provided such transportation.

Dispute Resolution Process (GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES)

Where a dispute arises regarding the enrollment or transportation of a student, the child shall be immediately enrolled or transported to the school chosen by the parent, if the parent claims the school is one of the three choices identified in Enrollment 1(A)-(C) above, until final resolution of the dispute.

1. Any individual alleging the abridgement of the educational rights of homeless children or youth by the CPS, or raising any issue of discrimination under this policy may initiate a grievance pursuant to the procedures described below. School personnel should assist the parent or youth in completing appropriate grievance forms.

A. Initial grievance information should be recorded and received at the local school by the principal or the principal's designee, on a form provided by the Homeless Education Coordinator. The principal should attempt to resolve the issue(s) raised by the end of the next school day AND notify the Homeless Coordinator of the grievance and its resolution.

B. If the principal is unable to resolve the grievance by the end of the next school day, it shall be immediately referred to the school's Regional Education Officer (REO) who will act as the Ombudsperson's designee.

C. The REO will review the grievance and if the dispute can not be resolved to the parents satisfaction the REO will convene a meeting of the parties and attempt to resolve the issue(s) raised within four school days.

D. Copies of all grievances filed and the resolution reached should be maintained in the school's office with a copy forwarded to the Homeless Coordinator.

E. The decision of the REO acting as the Ombudsperson's designee is the Board's final decision.

2. CPS staff may request assistance by calling the Coordinator of the Homeless Education Program.

3. If a dispute arises, CPS shall inform parents of homeless children of the availability of this grievance process, sources of low cost or free legal assistance, and other advocacy services in the community.

Training

On at least an annual basis, the Coordinator for the Homeless Education Program shall provide or cause to be provided at the Regional Meetings, in-services for all principals on the CPS Homeless Education Program. The training will cover the Policy, the Notice disseminated regarding the Policy, all procedures and forms promulgated pursuant to this Policy, and the laws applicable to the education of homeless children and youth. Principals are encouraged to allow the attendance of Assistant Principals or other staff responsible for the general enrollment of students at each school. Within 30 days of the scheduled in-service, each school shall certify to the Homeless Coordinator that its has received Homeless Education Training and has provided such training to its staff.

Coordination With Other Agencies

CPS will work cooperatively with The Department of Public Aid, The Department of Children and Family Services, The Department of Health and Human Services, The Department of Public Health, and other community organizations serving the needs of homeless students, to assist homeless students in receiving educational services provided by the CPS. Two times per year, CPS will conduct outreach meetings for community organizations and public and private agencies serving the homeless to disseminate CPS' policy and review its Homeless Education Program and other services provided to homeless students attending a CPS. Information disseminated at the meetings will be available upon request.

Amends/Rescinds:

Cross References:

Legal References: