



Hillsborough County Public Schools

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Enrollment Procedures and Rights

Priority: All students will be provided a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:

An unaccompanied homeless youth is defined as a youth who is not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian AND meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless by lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Enrollment of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:

Students who qualify for McKinney-Vento services are to be immediately enrolled, even if the required documentation is missing.

Enrollment Process:

The student with parent/legal guardian and/or adult caretaker, if available, should report to the school to complete the enrollment packet, including the McKinney-Vento Eligibility Residency Form B.

If there **is no** parent/legal guardian and/or adult caretaker available to register the student, the school designee for registration should notify school administration to facilitate **immediate** enrollment. The District Homeless Liaison will be contacted during or following enrollment to provide follow-up. The District Homeless Liaison (813-315-HELP) is responsible for assisting unaccompanied youth in making the decisions related to school selection options and enrollment. The unaccompanied homeless youth will be provided information related to the impact of school mobility and the right of the student to attend their school of origin.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth must be immediately coded in the Student Information System (on screens B, D, E).

A member of the Student Services staff will consult with the student and interested parties (to include, but not limited to the parent/legal guardian and/or adult caretaker) within a reasonable time frame to determine needs and arrange for services and/or appropriate referrals for services outside the district.

Homeless students have two options: school of origin or school attendance area

School stability under the McKinney-Vento Act means a student's right to continue attending his/her school of origin regardless of their area of residency.

- School of origin is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

- A student experiencing homelessness must remain enrolled in his or her school of origin, to the extent feasible, unless it is against the wishes of the unaccompanied youth.
- The student may remain in their school of origin for the duration of homelessness. He or she may also remain in their school of origin for the remainder of any academic year in which he or she becomes permanently housed.
- If a student is sent to a school other than one requested, the district must provide a written explanation to the parent or guardian of its decision and of his or her right to appeal.

Unaccompanied homeless youth may enroll in the school-serving students in the attendance area where they are currently spending their nights.

The District Homeless Liaison (813-315-HELP) is responsible for assisting unaccompanied youth in making the decision on which school to attend and enrolling in school. Liaisons and school staff working with families can help make sure that they know about the impact of school mobility and the right of the student to attend their school of origin.

Related Issues for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Student Emergency Records (emergency card):

Parent/legal guardians should remain on the Student Emergency Records (emergency card) unless court order denies parent educational rights. The adult or agency acting in the place of the parent can be listed as a contact, when a student is unaccompanied. In the case where the student is registering in Hillsborough County for the First Time- the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth will be registered by the Host family. When completing the Emergency Card, it may be appropriate to leave the Parent/Legal Guardian spaces on the card blank.

Student safety

If the student is under 18 and without adult support, Student Services staff will determine agency referral if there is no place to go or give consideration to contacting the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96ABUSE, to report a child in need of assistance. (This does not necessarily mean there is abuse/neglect).

Student Rights and Services:

- Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to immediate school enrollment and attendance, even without required enrollment documentation at either the ***school of origin*** (the school last attended before they lost their housing) **OR** the ***neighborhood school*** (the school they are zoned for based upon their nighttime residence)

- Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to remain at their ***school of origin*** for the duration of the school year even if they move outside of the school's attendance zone.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to school transportation to and from the ***school of origin*** for the duration of the current school year.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to receive free breakfast and lunch immediately for the duration of the school year.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to receive prompt resolutions about school placement, to include special education, bilingual education, gifted, and remedial programs.

Unaccompanied homeless youth will be provided an identification card certified by the District Homeless Liaison and provided by the H.E.L.P. office.

Unaccompanied homeless youth should be offered information on resources. This includes resources which are available at each school, as well as those available in the community. Please see Resource Maps or Student Services personnel.

Unaccompanied homeless youth seniors are eligible to receive letters documenting their unaccompanied homeless status. These letters may be submitted to a post-secondary institution to assist with financial aid. Unaccompanied homeless youth are also given assistance in the completion of FAFSA by the HELP Students in Transition school counselors. Unaccompanied homeless youth are also eligible to receive waivers for SAT, ACT and college applications for the school-based College and Career counselor.

Unaccompanied homeless youth should receive consideration for accommodations related to school assignments that are not completed on time and appropriate assistance to complete school assignments.

Unaccompanied homeless youth may use the HELP Students in Transition address or school address, if approved by school administration, for receipt of food stamps and Medicaid assistance until such time that the student obtains an address. Student Services staff are available to assist students if requested.

Physicals/Immunizations:

If a physical or immunizations are needed, consult the School Health Services personnel on site for next steps.

Sign out procedure:

The principal is ultimately responsible for determining the appropriateness of the sign-out and required information needed to make the decision.

Field Trips:

Parent/legal guardian/adult caretaker should be contacted to obtain permission for field trips. If there is no parent/legal guardian/adult caretaker, then a school administrator must be advised and determine appropriateness of student participation in off campus activities.

Services, supplies, and fees for unaccompanied homeless youth:

A Homeless Student Alert Form is to be completed to request support for the student. The School Social Worker typically completes this on-line form. The Homeless Education and Literacy Program office will assist with the completion of the Alert as needed and can be reached at 813-315-4357.

Unaccompanied homeless youth wishing to participate in Sports:

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth will be permitted to complete the packet to participate in athletics. Once a student represents themselves as an unaccompanied homeless youth, the Assistant Principal of Administration (APA) will notify the on-site Social Worker. The Social Worker will then notify the HELP Students in Transition team. The Homeless Liaison will then send a verification letter to the Director of Athletics. A missing Parent/Caregiver Signature will not halt the process. The need for a signature will be determined by the district's Director of Athletics on a case-by-case basis.

Homeless Unaccompanied Youth identified as ESE/504 eligible:

The appropriate Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Student Services personnel should be notified immediately to ensure the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for the student and to ensure compliance related to the procedural safeguards applicable to students with disabilities or students with 504 plans. In the State of Florida, age 18, is the age of majority. When a student attains the age of 18, parental rights transfer to the adult-age student, unless a court of law has determined otherwise.