



Homeless Education Policy

Empower College Prep's homeless policy is intended to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth. Students are entitled to certain rights and protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Who is considered homeless?

Homeless children and youth between the ages of 2 to 18 years old who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who:

- Share housing with another family due to loss of housing, stemming from financial hardship or a similar reason
- Live in motels, hotels, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to a lack of alternative adequate housing
- Live in emergency shelters or transitional housing program
- Abandoned hospitals
- Are awaiting foster care placement
- Live in a public or private place not designated for, or normally used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places
- Live in one of the above circumstances and who are migratory according to the definition in Section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)].

Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above.

Identification

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison will identify children and youth in transition in Empower College Prep, both in and out of school. The local liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth as in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the local liaison. The local liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to provide families the McKinney Vento Survey upon the enrollment of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the local liaison.

The local liaison will contact the family of the student who qualifies under the McKinney Vento Act. The local liaison provides assistance to meet the students' academic and nonacademic



needs to ensure that barriers to education are eliminated. The local liaison will keep data on the number of children and youth in transition at Empower College Prep.

School Selection

- Children and youth in transition can continue attending their school of origin the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The choice must be a reasonable one that is in the best interest of the children involved.
- If a child becomes homeless between academic years, he or she can continue attending the school of origin for the following school year.

Feasibility shall be a child-centered determination, based on the needs and interests of the particular student and the parent or youth's wishes. Potential feasibility considerations include:

- Safety of the student
- Continuity of instruction
- Likely area of family or youth's future housing
- Time remaining in the academic year
- Anticipated length of stay in temporary living situation
- School placement of siblings
- Whether the student has special needs that would render the commute harmful

Services that are required to be provided, including transportation to and from the school of origin (see next page) and services under federal and other programs, shall not be considered in determining feasibility.

Enrollment

- Enrollment for children and youth in transition may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:
 - Proof of Residency
 - Transcripts/school records
 - Immunizations
 - Proof of Guardianship
 - Birth Certificate
 - Any other document requirements
 - Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress code
 - Unpaid school fees
 - Any factor related to the student's living situation



- Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or local liaison

Transportation

- Transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for children and youth in transition.
 - Transportation will be provided for the entire time the child or youth has a right to attend that school, as defined above, including during pending disputes.
- The length of the commute will be considered in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the student, as discussed above.
- The local liaison in collaboration with the Operations Coordinator will request transportation for the child or youth.
 - Current Empower College Prep transportation will be utilized (Ex. School Bus or City Bus)
- Parents and unaccompanied youth will be informed of this right to transportation before they select a school for attendance.

Services

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including:

- Transportation (as described above)
- Title I, Part A services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners
- Vocational and technical education programs
- Gifted and talented programs
- School Nutrition Programs
 - Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals. On the day a child or youth in transition enrolls in school, the enrolling school must submit the student's name to the LEA's nutrition office for immediate processing.
- Before- and after-school programs
- Meals:



- All children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for free meals (breakfast and lunch)

Empower College Prep recognizes that children and youth in transition suffer from disabilities at a disproportionate rate, yet frequently are not evaluated or provided appropriate special education and related services. To address this problem, evaluations of children and youth in transition suspected of having a disability shall be given priority and coordinated with students' prior and subsequent schools as necessary to ensure timely completion of a full evaluation. When necessary, the LEA shall expeditiously designate a surrogate parent for unaccompanied youth suspected of having a disability. If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the enrolling school shall immediately implement it. Any necessary IEP meetings or re-evaluations shall then be conducted expeditiously. If complete records are not available, IEP teams must use good judgment in choosing the best course of action, balancing procedural requirements and the provision of services. In all cases, the goal will be to avoid any disruption in appropriate services.

When applying any LEA policy regarding tardiness or absences, any tardiness or absence related to a child or youth's living situation shall be excused. Our LEA will follow state procedures to ensure that youth in transition and youth who are out of school are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services. School personnel shall refer children and youth in transition to appropriate health care services, including dental and mental health services. The liaison will assist the school in making such referrals, as necessary.

School personnel must also inform parents of all educational and related opportunities available to their children and provide parents with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education. All parent information required by any provision of this policy must be provided in a form, manner, and language understandable to each parent.

Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending.

Empower College Prep will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer the parent or youth to the local liaison immediately. The local liaison will ensure that the student is enrolled in the requested school and receiving other services to which he or she is entitled and will resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth will be given every opportunity



to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The local liaison will keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition repeatedly.

The parent, unaccompanied youth, or school district may appeal the school district's decision as provided in the state's dispute resolution process.

https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=5c13ebe71dcb2511_2061e77a

Title I, Part A - Reservation of Funds

Title I, Part A Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless of what school they attend. Empower College Prep will reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to Title I students to children and youth in transition attending non-participating schools. The amount reserved will be determined by a formula based upon the per-pupil Title I, Part A, expenditure and developed jointly by the local liaison and the Title I director. Reserved funds will be used to provide education-related support services to children and youth in transition, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers that prevent regular attendance. Children and youth in transition shall be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education regulations and guidance.

Training

The local liaison will conduct an annual training for all Empower College Prep staff. The training will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to children and youth in transition.

References:

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§11431 – 11436.

Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§6311 – 6315.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§1400 et seq.