



HOMELESS EDUCATION POLICY & PROCEDURES

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) ensures homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths. To the extent practical, and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable Pre-School programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs. It has most recently been reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). The Atlantis Charter School's Homeless Education Policy addresses the following key components of the McKinney-Vento Act:

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The term "homeless children and youth" are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

This definition shall include:

1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals.
2. Children and youths who 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.
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children (as defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended) who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Designation of a Homeless Education Liaison

(A current list of Liaisons is available on the Department of Education (DOE) web site:

www.doe.mass.edu)

1. The Atlantis Charter School will designate a staff person whose role will be in part to ensure that homeless students enroll in school and that they receive the educational and other services for which they are eligible and ensure that:
2. homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination with other agencies;

3. homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school and to meet the same challenging state academic standards as other students, and receive educational services for which they are eligible;
4. homeless families, children and youth have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency;
5. homeless families, children and youth receive information and referrals for health care, dental services, mental health and other appropriate services in the community;
6. parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities, such as access to school nutrition programs, available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
7. public notice of the educational rights of homeless students and the district's adopted Homeless Education Policy are disseminated where children and youth receive services such as schools, family shelters, food pantries, health clinics and where families, children, and youth are ordinarily informed of school policies such as student handbooks, school newsletters or school websites;
8. enrollment disputes are mediated and resolved;
9. parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing needed transportation services;
10. district staff providing services to homeless students receive professional development and other support;
11. unaccompanied homeless youth are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academics standards as other students, are informed of their status as independent students, and are provided with verification of that status for the Free
12. Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA);
13. there is coordination and collaboration with the office of the state coordinator, the local community, service providers and school personnel providing education and related services to homeless families, children and youth;
14. reliable, valid, and comprehensive data is collected and reported to the state coordinator; and
15. upon receiving appropriate training, will provide homeless families, children, and youth who meet eligibility requirements for services from the Department of Housing and Community Development, verification of homelessness.

The Atlantis Charter School's Homeless Education Liaison is Gabriela Birmingham and can be contacted at 508-646-6410.

School Placement

School placement determinations must be based on the best interest of the homeless student.

In making decisions regarding best interests, Atlantis must:

- Presume keeping the student in the school of origin until the end of the year in which the student obtains permanent housing is in the student's best interest except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth;
- Consider student-centered factors related to the student's best interest including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless students, school placement of siblings, giving priority to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth

The school selected shall immediately enroll homeless students even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment, (i.e., school records, medical records or proof of residency). The Homeless Liaison will assist families if needed in obtaining the required records.

To the extent possible:

- Homeless students will continue to be enrolled in Atlantis Charter School while they remain homeless (unless parent or guardian objects) or to attend school where they are temporarily residing;
- Students who choose to remain in Atlantis Charter School have the right to remain there until the end of the school year in which they obtain permanent housing;
- If it is decided that student will not remain in the Atlantis Charter School, then the Homeless Liaison or designee will assist in enrolling the student in the district in which the student is residing

In the case of unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison or designee will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the requests of such unaccompanied youth.

Transportation

Homeless students are entitled to transportation at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison) to their school of origin or the school where they are enrolled.

Also, transportation will be provided:

- if the homeless student continues to live in the area served by the district in which the school of origin is located, that district must provide or arrange transportation if needed;
- if the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his or her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin; and
- if the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

If the request for transportation is made the Homeless Education Liaison will put in a transportation request to the Director of Transportation. The Director of Transportation will contact the Transportation Department and provide them with the necessary information for the student. The

Transportation Department will contact the parent/guardian to set up the pickup and drop off times and locations.

The Homeless Education Liaison will ensure that the parent or guardian of a homeless student, and any unaccompanied homeless youth, is fully informed, in the language of the home, of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected.

Enrollment

A homeless student is considered eligible to apply regardless of residency documentation. Based on the charter school enrollment policies if there is an available seat then the school must immediately enroll homeless students in school to provide educational stability and avoid separation from school for days or weeks while documents are located. Therefore, homeless education liaisons must ensure that:

- students who chose to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing must be enrolled immediately, even if they do not bring the records usually required for enrollment with them;
- if a homeless student arrives without records, the previously attended school district is contacted and the required records requested;
- that homeless students are attending school while the records are being requested;
- districts remove barriers to homeless students receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school; and
- information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record and not be deemed to be directory information and therefore cannot be shared with the public including landlords.

Disputes

If there is a school selection or enrollment dispute, the student shall immediately be enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The Atlantis Charter School District's Homeless Liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule.

Resources:

More information regarding the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act can be found at:

- Department of Education (DOE) website: www.doe.mass.edu
- National Coalition for the Homeless website: www.nationhomeless.org
- United States Department of Education website: www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/guidance.pdf

