



# International Charter Academy of Georgia Homeless Education Policy and Procedure

**2020/2021 School Liaison is - Operations Specialist**

## Homeless Education Compliance

International Charter Academy of Georgia fully complies with the Georgia Department of Education's guidance regarding the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth. The program authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC 11431 et seq.), (McKinney-Vento Act).

International Charter Academy of Georgia seeks to ensure that each homeless student has equal access to the same, free, appropriate public education, including public education, as provided to other students.

The primary goal of the Homeless Liaison is to eliminate barriers to school enrollment and promote academic success for all students. In addition to providing support to local schools, the Homeless liaison along with the school social workers serves as the link between families and community resources. The Homeless liaison is responsible for providing on-going training to families, schools, and community resources in an effort to promote awareness, education and most of all sensitivity to the needs of families/students experiencing homelessness.

Please click on the links below to learn more:

- Parent Brochure
- Homeless Education Poster

## Homeless Education Definitions

The term *children and youths experiencing homelessness* includes students who are otherwise legally entitled to, or eligible for, free, public education (including preschool), but who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term also includes:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardships, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals; or

- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Children and youth 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;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

A child or youth is considered to be experiencing homelessness for as long as he or she is in a living situation outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act and until the end of the school year in which the student moves into permanent housing.

The term *unaccompanied youth* includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and who is homeless as defined by law. The more general term *youth* also includes unaccompanied youth.

The term *enroll* and enrollment *include* attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

*Immediate* means without delay.

*Parent* means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth. Legal guardians are included in this term.

*School of origin* means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

*Local Liaison* is the staff person designated by the system's local educational agency (LEA) and each LEA in the state as the person responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to the liaison by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

## Identification

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison or designee will identify children and youths experiencing homelessness in the district, both in and out of school, and maintain access to data regarding students in this situation. The local liaison or designee will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth experiencing homelessness, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The local liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to offer homeless education information upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison.

The local liaison will keep data on the number of children and youths experiencing homelessness in the district - where they are living, their academic achievement (including performance on state and district-wide assessments), and the reason for any enrollment delays, interruption in their education, or school transfers.

## School Selection

Each child and youth experiencing homelessness has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend the school that serves students who live in the attendance zone in which the child or youth is actually living. Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youths experiencing homelessness shall remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's parents or guardian. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in their situation and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years. In addition, the student shall receive appropriate credit for full or

partial course work satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school in accordance with state, local, and school policy.

## **Enrollment**

Consistent, uninterrupted education is vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students experiencing homelessness may not have school enrollment documents readily available. Nonetheless, the school selected for enrollment must immediately enroll any child or youth in this situation. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment.

Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or the LEA local liaison. If complete records are not available, IEP teams or other committees or school officials, as appropriate, 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 all appropriate services.

The International Charter Academy of Georgia Enrollment Plan seeks to eliminate barriers and ensures that enrollment under the McKinney-Vento Act may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of documentation normally required to enroll.

Such documents include:

- Proof of residency
- transcripts/school records
- Immunization or health records
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth certificate
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of uniforms
- Any factor related to the student's living condition
- Any other documentation requirements

## **Transportation**

Transportation is not offered to any student at the International Charter Academy of Georgia; however, ICAGeorgia will provide vouchers for public transportation when needed by any student considered experiencing homelessness.

## **Services**

Children and youths experiencing homelessness shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected. 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.

## **Disputes**

If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this policy, the child or youth experiencing homelessness will be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The

student shall also have the rights of a student experiencing homelessness to all appropriate educational services while the dispute is pending.

The school where the dispute arises shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision, give an explanation of the right to appeal, and immediately refer the parent or youth to the local liaison. The parent or unaccompanied youth shall be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute.

## **Title I, Part A**

Children and youths experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend. The district's Title I plan will be coordinated with all McKinney-Vento services through collaboration between the Title I Director and the local liaison. Children and youths experiencing homelessness will be assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education Regulations and Policy Guidance.

## **Training**

The local liaison or designee will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for the appropriate school support staff at least once each year.

The local liaison shall also obtain from every school the name and contact information of a building liaison. Building liaisons will lead and coordinate their school's compliance with this policy and will receive training from the local liaison annually.

## **Coordination**

The local liaison shall coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator from Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other organizations and agencies.