

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN TRANSITION POLICY

Although children and youth who lack permanent housing are sometimes referred to as “homeless,” it is the policy of the Natick Public Schools to view children as individuals. Therefore, this policy will use the term, “children and youth in transition,” rather than “homeless children.”

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with children and youth in transition and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. In order to provide children and youth who have lost their housing and/or lack permanent housing equal access to free, appropriate public education, it is the objective of the Natick Public Schools to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in transition in accordance with state and federal law.

Definitions

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has adopted Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act regarding the definition of homeless children and youth:

- *individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately, operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.*

This definition shall include:

- children and youth 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; are abandoned in hospitals; ~~or are 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;
- migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above; and
- unaccompanied youth a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- **Preschool children or youth that fall into one of the above categories**

Liaison

The Superintendent shall designate at least one staff member in the district to serve as the Children and Youth in Transition Liaison, whose role will be to fulfill the duties set forth in state and federal law. The Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services will act as the Liaison for the Natick Public

Schools.

File: JFABD

Student's Rights to School Selection

The Natick Public Schools will either continue the student's education in the school of origin, or designated receiving feeder school, until the end of the year in which the student obtains permanent housing; or enroll the student in a public school that non-children and youth in transition who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

Enrollment

The Natick Public Schools will immediately enroll children and youth in transition in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment, such as school records, medical records or proof of residency.

Transportation Services

The Natick Public Schools will ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Liaison), to and from the school of origin. This right extends through the end of the school year in which the student becomes permanently housed.

Services

Children and youth in transition are automatically assessed for eligibility for Title I services, regardless of what school they attend if such services are offered for student's assigned grade. Children and youth in transition 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, English Language Learner education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, extracurricular activities, summer programming, and school nutrition programs.

Access to Child Nutrition Programs

It is the policy of the Natick Public Schools to ensure that children and youth in transition are able to participate in federal, state, or local food programs. School lunch and other nutrition programs offered by the district will be made available to children and youth in transition.

Records

The living arrangement of a child or youth in transition shall not be released without parental consent. Due consideration will be given on a case by case basis to determine what, if any class lists, the child will be included within.

Dispute Resolution

The Natick Public Schools will utilize the procedures for Dispute Resolution as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act Section 722(g): 42 U.S.C.11432(g). If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall immediately enroll in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing, and the district's liaison will carry out dispute resolute as provided by state rule.

LEGAL REFS: The McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, Part A, as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015
~~Title I, Part C, No Child Left Behind Act, 2002~~