
EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY

The Pathways Academy Adult Education Board of Directors (the “Board” or the “School”) desires to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational program, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic standards, are provided a free and appropriate public education, are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

The term “homeless student” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. Are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
2. Are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
3. Are living in emergency or transitional shelters
4. Are abandoned in hospitals
5. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
6. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
7. Are migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless”

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent/guardian of minor students. In the case of adult students or unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the School Liaison.

SCHOOL LIAISON

The program director will act as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) & (e)(3)(C)(i)(IV)):

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The School Liaison shall ensure that the following requirements are fulfilled by the School (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

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1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at the School.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible including: services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act; early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”); any other preschool programs administered by the School, if any; and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
4. If applicable, parents/guardians of minor students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their students and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their students.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents/guardians of such minor youth, and unaccompanied youth, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians of minor homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with the law, the School, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians of minor students and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. The School Liaison collaborates with state coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

ENROLLMENT

The School shall immediately admit/enroll the student (subject to the School’s capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the School and Board policy), even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment (such as previous academic records, records of immunizations, other required health records, proof of residency) or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C); Education Code Section 48850(a)(3)(A).)

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If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the program director or designee shall refer the unaccompanied youth or parent/guardian of a minor student to the School Liaison. The School Liaison shall assist the unaccompanied youth or parent/guardian of a minor student in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C).)

ENROLLMENT DISPUTES

If a dispute arises over admissions/enrollment, the student shall be immediately admitted (subject to school's capacity) and pursuant to the procedures stated in the school charter and Board policy), pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The parent/guardian of a minor student or unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the admission/enrollment decision, including an explanation of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth's right to appeal the decision. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth shall also be referred to the School Liaison. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The School Liaison shall carry out the board-adopted dispute resolution and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

COMPARABLE SERVICES

Each homeless child or youth shall promptly be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the School such as (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)):

1. Transportation services
2. Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for students with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency
3. Programs in vocational and technical education
4. Programs for gifted and talented students
5. School nutrition programs

TRANSPORTATION

In the event that the School provides transportation services to all students, the School shall provide comparable transportation services to each homeless child or youth attending the School, as noted above. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4).)

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If the School does not otherwise provide transportation services to all students, the School shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from the School, at the request of the parent/guardian of a minor student, or School Liaison. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J).)

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS- 4 YEARS

The Charter School shall exempt a homeless student from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the Charter School that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements, if:

The Charter School does not make a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the school district's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the fourth year

The student transfers between schools any time after the completion of the second year of high school; and,

The student must meet the definition of homeless at the time the student transfers schools.

The Charter School can determine if the homeless student is in his/her third or fourth year of high school, by using either the number of credits earned to the date of transfer or the length of school enrollment by the homeless student.

A homeless student who is eligible for exemption and is entitled to remain in attendance at the school shall not be:

required to accept the exemption, or

denied enrollment in, or the ability to complete, courses that the homeless student is eligible for, including courses that are necessary to attend an institution of higher education, regardless of whether those courses are required for statewide graduation requirements.

If the homeless student qualifies for the exemption and requests it, then the Charter School shall grant that exemption. Once exempted, the Charter School cannot revoke the exemption. Within 30 days of the exemption, the Charter School shall notify the homeless student, the holder of the homeless student's educational rights and the homeless liaison regarding the availability of the exemption and if the homeless student qualifies:

If the exempted, homeless student completes the statewide coursework requirements before the end of his/her fourth year in high school, then the Charter School cannot require or request the student to graduate before the end of his/her fourth year.

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Additionally, the Charter School shall notify the exempted, homeless student and the educational rights' holder regarding:

How any of the waived requirements will affect the ability for the homeless student to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institute, and;

Provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges

An eligible student cannot be forced to take an exemption. The Charter School cannot require or request a homeless student to transfer schools in order to qualify for an exemption under AB 1806. The educational rights' holder, or the homeless liaison, cannot request a transfer solely to qualify the homeless student for an exemption. If the student was not told about the exemption option when the student was homeless, the student can still be eligible even after the student is permanently housed. If the student was homeless and eligible for the exemption but declined it, and then later while still homeless, decides to accept the exemption, the student would still be eligible for the exemption. If the student was homeless and eligible for the exemption, but declined it, and then later became housed and decides to accept the exemption, the student would no longer be eligible for the exemption.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS- 5 YEARS

If the Charter School determines that the homeless student is reasonably able to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements within the student's fifth year of high school, then the Charter School shall do all of the following:

Inform the homeless student of his/her options to remain in school for a fifth year;

Inform the homeless student and the person holding educational rights of how remaining in a school for a fifth year will affect the student's ability to gain admission to postsecondary;

Provide information to the homeless student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; and,

Permit the homeless student to stay for a fifth year with the agreement from the homeless student, if the student is eighteen years of age or older or, from the educational rights' holder, if the homeless student is younger than eighteen years of age

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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All administrators, teachers and employees of the School will be provided professional development on the identification, services, and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless students. (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(3).) All identified or suspected homeless students will be referred to the School Liaison.

NOTICE

For any homeless student who seeks enrollment at the Charter School, written notice will be provided to the adult student or parent/guardian of a minor student at the time of enrollment and while the student is enrolled at the School in alignment with the law. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C).)

The notice shall be signed by the adult student or parent/guardian of a minor student (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth) and notify them of their rights pursuant to this policy. Specifically, the notice shall state that no homeless child or youth is required to attend a separate school for homeless children or youths; that homeless children and youths shall be provided comparable services as described above, including transportation services, educational services, and meals through school meals programs; and that homeless children and youths should not be stigmatized by School personnel; and provides contact information for the School Liaison and the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths.