

Child Accounting Guidelines

Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program

Effective Date: January 1, 2017

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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For Inquiries Concerning Nondiscrimination in Employment:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Equal Employment Opportunity Representative
Bureau of Human Resources
333 Market Street, 11th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Voice Telephone: (717) 787-4417
Fax: (717) 783-9348
Text Telephone TTY: (717) 783-8445

For Inquiries Concerning Nondiscrimination in All Other Pennsylvania Department of Education Programs and Activities:

Pennsylvania Department of Education School Services Unit Director
333 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Voice Telephone: (717) 783-3750
Fax: (717) 783-6802
Text Telephone TTY: (717) 783-8445

If you have any questions about this publication or for additional copies, contact:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction
333 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
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www.education.pa.gov

All Media Requests/Inquiries: Contact the Office of Press & Communications at (717) 783-9802

This document is a joint product of the Child Accounting section within the Division of Subsidy Data and Administration, Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Management and the Homeless Office within the Division of Student Services, Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction at the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

The “**Education for Homeless Youth 42 U.S.C. §11431**” Basic Education Circular (BEC) provides definitions for homeless children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.

Homeless children are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), from either the school district in which their person or the shelter is located, or the school district of origin.

According to the McKinney-Vento Act the 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. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g) (3) (G).

- The parent has a choice in deciding whether the child is educated in the school of origin or in the school within the attendance area where they are living. This would depend upon feasibility and best interest of the child (e.g. age, safety, siblings, special needs, the commute, how much time is left in the school year, etc.).
- Homeless families are not required to prove residency regarding school enrollment; however, the Homeless Act does not prohibit a local education agency (LEA) from requiring a parent or guardian of a homeless child to submit contact information.
- A child who has been identified as homeless shall continue to be considered homeless until it is reported to the LEA that the child is no longer homeless or until the LEA proves non-homelessness through investigation.

In cases when the student becomes permanently housed during the academic year and the student’s parent or guardian requests that the student continues in the school of origin, which is not in the school district of new residence, the educating school district will continue to educate the formerly homeless student until the end of the academic year, and should maintain the homeless student on its rolls as a non-resident student. The educating school district should advise the new school district of residence of its financial responsibility for this student and send a tuition bill.

- The burden of proof for establishing non-homelessness is on the LEA. Usually this responsibility rests with the home and school visitor, pupil personnel specialist, social worker, principal, vice-principal, or the local educational homeless liaison in every LEA. The state coordinator for the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program at PDE can offer technical assistance on this matter.

Child Accounting Procedures

1. Homeless students educated by the school district of origin shall be reported as resident students (these students may or may not be living in a shelter, facility, or institution).
2. Homeless students living in a motel, hotel, car, campground, doubling-up, or sharing housing with a resident family and educated by the school district in which they are temporarily living, shall be reported as resident students (these students are not living in a shelter, facility, or institution).

3. Homeless students living in a shelter, facility, or institution and educated by the school district in which they are temporarily living shall be reported as non-resident students.
 - a. If the original school district acknowledges residency on the PDE-4605, "Determination of District of Residence for Students in Facilities or Institutions in Accordance with Section 1306 of School Code," the educating school district (host school district) will bill the resident school district.
 - b. If the original school district disclaims residency on the PDE-4605, the educating school district should submit a written request to PDE's School Services Office to make a determination regarding "ward of the state" status.

NOTE: Reasons why school districts must properly identify homeless students within their internal systems: (1) homeless students are entitled to utilize the free/reduced lunch program; (2) homeless students are eligible for services under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and (3) homeless students must be reported by grade-level for Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) purposes.

Below is general guidance in establishing homelessness that is in addition to information provided in the BEC "Education of Homeless Youth." These four key questions can help resolve most cases.

- a. Was there an event?
- b. Is the current living arrangement due to a lack of housing?
- c. Is this situation temporary?
- d. Is the parent in control of the event?

The following are different scenarios regarding homelessness:

- A. **Parent(s) and child move in with another family (doubled-up) in another school district outside the geographical area of the school district of origin (Allentown to Pittsburgh). Which school district is responsible for educating the child and what about multiple occupancy?**

In this situation, since it would not be feasible to transport the child to the school district of origin, the school district in which the family is living doubled-up would be responsible for the education. Since the child is not in a shelter, facility, or institution, the child shall be reported as a resident.

- B. **Parent(s) and child remove themselves (evicted, fire, flood, loss of job, etc.) from their place of residence, and move into a neighboring school district's shelter. Which school district is responsible for educating the child?**

Parents have a choice between the school district of origin (resident school district/school district attended when permanently housed), or the school district for the attendance area of the shelter. If the school district of origin is chosen (feasible, best interest), the child should be reported as a resident of the school district of origin.

If the school district for the attendance area of the shelter is chosen, this educating school district should send a PDE-4605 to the school district of origin.

- C. **Does the McKinney-Vento Act apply to Pennsylvania charter schools?**

Yes. A Pennsylvania charter or cyber charter school ("charter school") must follow the Act's requirements for LEAs, including designating a liaison, identifying homeless students, and ensuring immediate enrollment.

Effective July 1, 2015, if the student is enrolled in a charter school, the school district of origin will remain financially responsible for the education of the student unless and until the student is no longer deemed homeless.

The charter school must enroll a homeless student as long as other students living in the same area would be eligible to attend the school if classroom space is available. If the charter school has particular skills-related entrance requirements, the student must meet those criteria (for

example, a fine arts charter school with requirements related to artistic ability). However, enrollment deadlines must be waived for students experiencing homelessness.

Reference

PA School Code can be obtained from the PDE website at www.education.pa.gov. On the left, under “I would like to...,” select View Codes and Regulations, then “Public School Code of 1949.” Scroll down to Article XIII, Pupils and Attendance.

- Section 1302, Residence and right-to-free-school privileges
- Section 1306, Non-resident inmates of children’s institutions

Basic Education Circulars (BEC) can be obtained from the PDE website at www.education.pa.gov. On the left, under “I would like to...,” select View Basic Education Circulars (BECs). The circulars are listed in alphabetical order.

- Determination of Residence of Children Living in Pennsylvania Institutions, 24 P.S. § 13-1308
- Education of Homeless Youth, 42 U.S.C. §11431
- Enrollment of Students, 24 P.S. § 13-1301 - 13-1306
- Nonresident Students in Institutions, 24 P.S. § 13-1306

For Further Information

Child accounting questions should be referred to:

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Specific homeless questions should be referred to your LEA’s Homeless Liaison and Regional Homeless Coordinator. If necessary, contact:

Storm Camara, State Coordinator
Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness
Division of Student Services
Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction
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