

**River City Education Organization Inc.  
Homeless Students Policy**

- I. Children and youth at River City Education Organization Inc. (RCEO) who experience homelessness, including those not currently enrolled due to homelessness, will have equal access to the same free, public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths, and other services needed to ensure an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic achievement standards to which all students are held, and to fully participate in RCEO's academic and extracurricular activities.
- II. RCEO will remove barriers to:
  - A. Identifying homeless children and youth.
  - B. The enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in an eligible school.
- III. RCEO will:
  - A. Provide access to homeless children to public preschool programs administered by RCEO.
  - B. Provide appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by homeless children and youth while attending a prior school.
  - C. Provide access for homeless children and youth to academic and extracurricular activities.
  - D. Coordinate RCEO programs and collaborate with other programs, community service providers and organizations, including:
    1. Local social services and other community agencies to provide support to homeless students and their families;
    2. Other school districts regarding homeless student-related transportation, transfer of school records, and other inter-district activities, as needed;
    3. Housing authorities; and
    4. Exceptional Student Education (ESE).
- IV. Definitions
  - A. Homeless Children and Youth - Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who:
    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 a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
    6. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or
    7. Are migratory children or youth who are living in circumstances described above.
  - B. Unaccompanied Youth – A homeless child or youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
  - C. School of Origin – The school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school where the child or youth was last enrolled, including a preschool.

- D. Enroll and Enrollment – Attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
- E. Immediate – Without delay.
- F. Parent – Parent or guardian of a student.
- G. Designated receiving school includes the next level school, elementary from prekindergarten, middle from elementary, high from middle, that a homeless child or youth, whose homelessness continues into the next school year, may attend when that next level school is in the district designated school for those students in the homeless student’s school of origin.
- H. Eligible School: The school of origin, the school zoned for the address where the student is temporarily residing, or another school which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend.
- V. RCEO will designate an appropriate staff person able to carry out the duties described in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as the liaison for homeless children and youth.
- VI. RCEO assures that children and youth will not be stigmatized, segregated, or separated in any educational program on the basis of their homeless status.
- VII. RCEO shall identify homeless children and youth as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. If RCEO’s liaison for homeless children and youth determines that a minor, age 16 or older, is a “certified unaccompanied homeless youth” per Florida Statutes, the liaison shall issue to the youth a certificate documenting his/her status as required by Florida law.
- VIII. The District will ensure the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth to an eligible school and assures that:
  - A. A homeless child or youth may continue their education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness or in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year;
  - B. Keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is presumed to be in the child’s or youth’s best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child’s or youth’s parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
  - C. When considering a placement in a school other than the child’s or youth’s school of origin, RCEO will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student’s best interest;
  - D. The eligible school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth missed an application or enrollment deadline during any period of homelessness.
  - E. When a school other than the school of origin is selected, will remove barriers to enrollment and enroll homeless children and youth immediately, even if they cannot produce records, including:
    - 1. Previous academic records;
    - 2. Immunizations or other health records;
    - 3. Birth certificate;
    - 4. Proof of residency;
    - 5. Guardianship;
    - 6. Uniform or dress code requirements;

- 7. Outstanding fees, fines, or absences;
  - 8. Other required documentation.
- F. A homeless child or youth shall be given a temporary document exemption to provide proof of age, certification of a school-entry health examination, proof of immunization and other documentation required for enrollment.
- IX. Each homeless child and youth shall be provided the services that are available comparable to services offered to non-homeless students in their school, including the following:
- A. Transportation;
  - B. School nutrition programs;
  - C. Programs for gifted and talented students;
  - D. Programs in career and technical education;
  - E. Preschool programs administered by RCEO;
  - F. Before- and after-school programs administered by RCEO; and
  - G. Educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria, including Title I, ESE, and educational programs for English language learners.
- X. A homeless student who becomes permanently housed during the academic year, may remain at their school of origin for the remainder of the academic year and continue to receive all McKinney-Vento Act benefits.
- XI. Children and youth experiencing homelessness, and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, will have access to all available academic and extracurricular activities for which they meet relevant eligibility criteria.
- XII. Unaccompanied homeless high school youth will receive counseling to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education.
- XIII. Records for homeless children and youth will be:
- A. Treated as a student education record, and will not be deemed to be directory information, under section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act;
  - B. Maintained for each homeless child or youth, including:
    - 1. Immunization or other required health records;
    - 2. Birth certificate;
    - 3. Academic records;
    - 4. Guardianship records; and
    - 5. Evaluations for special services.
  - C. Made available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school; and
  - D. Held confidential in a manner consistent with section 444 of the General Education Provision Act.
- XIV. Transportation
- A. Transportation to and from a child's or youth's school of origin will be provided or arranged, at the request of the parent or guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied child or youth, RCEO's designated liaison for the homeless children and youth.
  - B. When the child's or youth's living arrangements are in an area served by another school district (district of residence), RCEO will coordinate with the district of residence to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child or youth with

transportation to and from the school of origin. If unable to agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.

XV. Disputes

- A. When considering placement in a school other than the child's or youth's school of origin, RCEO will consider student-centered factors to determine a placement that is in the student's best interest.
- B. When RCEO determines that a placement other than the school of origin is in the best interest, RCEO will provide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth with:
  - 1. A written explanation, in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth; and
  - 2. Information on the right to appeal the placement determination.
- C. During a school selection dispute:
  - 1. The child or youth will either remain enrolled in the student's school of origin or shall be immediately enrolled in the eligible school in which enrollment is sought, either the school zoned for the address where the student is residing or another school which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend, pending final resolution of the dispute including all available appeals;
  - 2. The parent or guardian of the child or youth or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth shall be provided with a written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by the school, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions; and
  - 3. The parent guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to RCEO's designated homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
  - 4. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in the school in which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of such dispute.

- XVI. RCEO shall follow the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Florida Statutes.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: ss. 1001.41, 1001.42, 1003.21, F.S.

LAW(S) IMPLEMENTED: ss. 743.067, 1000.21, 1001.43, 1003.01, 1003.21, 1003.22, F.S.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT, P.L.100-77

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT OF 2015