

ADMISSION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN

The Albemarle County School Board is committed to educating homeless children and youth. Homeless children and youth shall not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The school division will coordinate the identification and provision of services to such students with relevant local social services agencies and other agencies and programs providing services to such students, and with other school divisions as may be necessary to resolve interdivisional issues.

The Albemarle County Public School Division (“ACPS”) will serve each homeless student according to the student’s best interest and will:

- continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness
- if the student becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or
- for the remainder of the academic year, if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
- enroll the student in the public school serving the attendance area in which they currently live.

In determining the best interest of a homeless student, the Albemarle County School Board:

- presumes that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student’s best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student’s parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- considers student-centered factors related to the student’s best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health and safety of homeless students, giving priority to the request of the student’s parent or guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
- if, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the presumption and the student-centered factors above, ACPS determines that it is not in the student’s best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, provides the student’s parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth, including information regarding the right to appeal; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the division’s homeless liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions regarding the student, gives preference to the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal.

Enrollment

The school selected in accordance with this policy shall immediately enroll the homeless student, even if the student

- is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation; or
- has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, other required health records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the student, or, (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, to the district's homeless liaison, who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or other required health records.

If the documentation regarding the comprehensive physical examination required by Policy JHCA cannot be furnished for a homeless child or youth, and the person seeking to enroll the pupil furnishes to the school division an affidavit stating that the documentation cannot be provided because of the homelessness of the child or youth and also indicating that, to the best of his or her knowledge, such pupil is in good health and free from any communicable or contagious disease, the school division shall immediately refer the student to the local school division homeless liaison who shall, as soon as practicable, assist in obtaining the necessary physical examination by the county or city health department or other clinic or physician's office and shall immediately admit the pupil to school.

The decision regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the student lives with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over eligibility, or school selection or enrollment in a school:

- the homeless student shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals;
- the parent or guardian of the student (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth) or the youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment made by the school, the school division, or the Virginia Department of Education, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision;
- the student, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the district's homeless liaison who shall carry out the appeal process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in the school in which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of the dispute.

Appeal Process

Oral Complaint

In the event that an unaccompanied student or the parent or guardian of a student (hereinafter referred to as the Complainant) disagrees with a school's decision regarding the

student's eligibility to attend the school, the Complainant shall orally present his position to the division's homeless liaison.

Written Complaint

If the disagreement is not resolved within five (5) school days, the Complainant may present a written complaint to the homeless liaison. The written complaint must include the following information: the date the complaint is given to the homeless liaison; a summary of the events surrounding the dispute; the name(s) of the school division personnel involved in the enrollment decision; and the result of the presentation of the oral complaint to the homeless liaison.

Within five (5) school days after receiving the written complaint, the homeless liaison will reach a decision regarding the contested enrollment and shall provide a written statement of that decision, including the reasons therefore, to the Complainant. The liaison will inform the Superintendent, or his/her designee, of the formal complaint and its resolution.

Appeal to Superintendent

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the written decision of the homeless liaison, the Complainant may appeal that decision to the Superintendent, or his/her designee by filing a written appeal. The homeless liaison shall ensure that the Superintendent, or his designee, receives copies of the written complaint and the response thereto. The Superintendent or designee shall schedule a conference with the Complainant to discuss the complaint. Within five (5) school days of receiving the written appeal, the Superintendent designee shall provide a written decision to the Complainant including a statement of the reasons therefore.

Comparable Services

Each homeless student shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school attended by the homeless student including the following:

- transportation services;
- educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title I, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for English Learners;
- programs in career and technical education;
- programs for gifted and talented students; and
- school nutrition programs.

Transportation

At the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), transportation is provided for a homeless student to and from the school of origin as follows:

- if the homeless child or youth continues to live in the area served by the division in which the school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to and from the school of origin is provided or arranged by the division in which the school of origin is located.

- if the homeless child's or youth's living arrangements in the area served by the division in which the school of origin is located terminate and the child or youth, though continuing his or her education in the school of origin, begins living in an area served by another division, the division of origin and the division in which the homeless child or youth is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the divisions are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation are shared equally.

Definitions

The term “homeless student” means an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- children and youths, including unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of their parents who
 - are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; or are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - 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, or
 - are living in parked cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this policy because the children are living in circumstances described above.

The term “migratory child” means a child who who moved from one residence to another and from one school division to another in the preceeding 36months as a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher or with, or to join, a parent or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher.

The term “school of origin” means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Adopted: November 20, 2003

Amended: August 8, 2013; October 18, 2018

Legal Refs.: 20 U.S.C. §6399
42 U.S.C. §§11302, 11431, 11432, 11433, 11434a

Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, §§ 22.1-3, 22.1-70, 22.1-78, 22.1253.13:1.
22.1-270

Cross Refs.: JEC School Admission
JHCA Physical Examination of Students