

Educational Stability

Students Who Are Homeless, In Foster Care or Military Families
Homeless/Foster Care Liaison: Joyce West, PPS Director



Gardner Public Schools

Updated: August 2023

Definition: Who is Homeless?

Anyone, including applicable preschool-aged child or unaccompanied youth, who lacks fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; this includes:

- Shelters, motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds
- On the street: cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus/train stations
- Doubling up - Sharing the housing of other persons
 - *due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason*
- Migrant children in these living arrangements
- Abandoned in hospital

As of December 10, 2016, awaiting foster care is no longer included in this definition.

Signs of Homelessness

- Lack of educational continuity
- Poor health/nutrition
- Transportation and attendance problems
- Poor hygiene
- Lack of personal space after school
- Social and behavioral concerns
- Reactions or statements by parents, guardians or students

[Please see the List of Common Signs of Homelessness for a more comprehensive explanation.](#)

Impact on Students

Homelessness affects:

- Whole family
- School attendance
- The ability to focus and learn
- Education gaps due to mobility/transient
- Behavior

Homelessness is often accompanied with:

- Food insecurity
- Lack of medical, dental, and mental health services
- Loss of connection to family, friends, community

Homelessness also impacts the teacher, classmates and the others in the school:

- Students coming and going
- Could that happen to me?
- I've been worried about her.
- Is he going to be ok?
- Is he safe?

Identification and Rights

Identification:

- Upon Registration - Housing Questionnaire
- Student/Parent disclosure
- Immediate Notification to Homeless Liaison

Rights (includes Pre-school aged/Youth out of school):

- Immediate Enrollment
- School Selection: school of origin or local enrollment
- Transportation
- Free and reduced lunch
- Access to all activities including summer school, extracurricular
- Credit accrual for partially completed work
- College/Career Counseling, assistance with FAFSA and verification of homelessness
- FERPA: living arrangement is student record not directory info
- Referrals to health/dental, mental health, housing and other community services

School Placement & Transportation

- Homeless students have the right to remain enrolled in their school of origin (the school the student attended when permanently housed, the school in which the student was last enrolled, or designated receiving school)

OR

- Immediately enroll in the school district where they are temporarily residing
- Homeless students rights to remain enrolled while homeless or until the end of the school year in which they receive permanent housing
- Homeless students are entitled to transportation through the end of the school year in which they become permanently housed

PPS Office coordinates all transportation needs.

Assisting Homeless Students

- All Staff: notify Homeless Liaison, Administration, School Counselors, Care Coordinators, if you suspect a student may be homeless. These staff will notify the Homeless Liaison to ensure education stability and rights are being met.
- Homeless Liaison, Pupil Services Administrative Assistants will coordinate the necessary supports and services.

Students in Foster Care (ESSA Definition)

Students who are in:

- 24-hour substitute care, placed away from their parents or guardians, and for whom the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has placement and care responsibilities.
- Foster homes including, but not limited to: Group homes, kinship foster homes, STARR, Transitional care units (TCUs), residential facilities, child care institutions, pre-adoptive homes.

Includes students previously identified as “awaiting foster care” (in emergency, short term placements) under McKinney-Vento.

Educational Rights of Students in Foster Care

- **Immediate Point-of-Contact with the District:** Director of Pupil Personnel Services (PPS Office will initiate records transfer and help facilitate transition.)
- If determined to be in a student's best interest to attend school locally (where placed in foster care), the local school district must enroll immediately, with or without documentation, including:
 - *Academic, health, discipline and/or special education records*
- Notice to Local Education Agency (from DCF), includes:
 - *Emergency contact, residence, social worker, record release, transportation needs, etc.*
 - *Notice **must** be given to the PPS Office*

Note: If there is no change in the school the student is attending, there should be no change in enrollment.

School of Origin

- School the student was attending when placed in foster care, or at the time of a subsequent change in foster care placement.
- To promote educational stability, students should remain enrolled in and continue to attend their school of origin, unless, after a best interest determination, it is decided to be in their best interest not to.
- Students in foster care have a right to remain in their school of origin for the duration of their time in foster care or until all grades in the school are completed.

Transportation

- Districts and DCF must collaborate to establish policies and procedures to ensure that students who need transportation to remain in their school of origin get it.
- Absent another agreement, districts of origin are responsible for providing transportation to and from the school of origin.
- The District POC/PPS Office works with DCF to set up any transportation needs

Best Interest Determination

- Best Interest Determination: Decision to continue in school of origin or in a student's best interest to attend school locally (where placed in foster care).
- Decisions about which school a student will attend should be made collaboratively, (DCF and PPS Office/POC) and consider a wide variety of factors.
- Should include those in the best position to understand the student's unique needs.
- Some examples: Age, grade, distance or time of travel, preference of student, time of year, school services/specialized services, length of time in placement etc.
- Process should be collaborative, but doesn't need to be one big meeting.

Rights of Students in Military Families

- Gardner Public School District facilitates the placement, enrollment, graduation, data collection and provision of special services for students transferring into or out of the District because of their parents/guardians being on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services
- District Liaison/POC: PPS Director Joyce West

Please review the following **required** documentation before continuing to the next slide:

- [JB - Equal Educational Opportunities](#)
- [JFABD - Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services](#)
- [JFABE - Educational Opportunities for Military Children](#)
- [JFABF - Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care](#)
- [JI - Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

If employees have any questions regarding this training module or required documentation, please contact your direct supervisor or your school's principal.

In order to complete this training, please proceed to the form linked below to confirm receipt of all documentation:

- [Certification of Completion of the Educational Stability: Homeless/Foster/Military Student Rights Mandatory Training](#)