

**ADMISSION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS**

Maine School Administrative District 15 recognizes that homelessness alone should not be a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. MSAD 15 will strive to ensure that homeless students are identified and provided access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students in the school system. In accordance with federal and state law and regulations, MSAD 15 will provide homeless students with access to the instructional programming that supports achievement of the content standards of Maine’s system of Learning Results and to other services for which they are eligible. Students shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless, nor shall they be stigmatized in any way.

**DEFINITIONS**

- A. “Homeless” students are those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence and include the following:
  - 1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
  - 2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
  - 3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
  - 4. Migratory children who meet one of the above-described circumstances.
- B. “School of origin” means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
- C. “Unaccompanied youth” refers to a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (e.g., runaway’s and children and youth denied housing by their families).

45 HOMELESS STUDENT LIAISON

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47 A. The Superintendent shall designate an individual to act as the school unit's Homeless  
48 Student Liaison. The school unit shall inform school personnel, service providers and  
49 advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the school unit's Homeless  
50 Student Liaison.

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52 B. The Homeless Student Liaison will be responsible for ensuring that:

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54 1. Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through  
55 coordination activities with other entities and agencies;

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57 2. Homeless children and youths enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to  
58 succeed in schools within the school unit;

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60 3. Homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which  
61 they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs  
62 administered by the school unit, and referrals to health care services, dental  
63 services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;

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65 4. The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the  
66 educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided  
67 with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;

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69 5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is  
70 disseminated where such children and youths receive services, such as schools,  
71 family shelters, and soup kitchens;

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73 6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law;

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75 7. The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied  
76 youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to  
77 the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school the  
78 student will be attending;

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80 8. Unaccompanied youths are assisted in placement or enrollment decisions and  
81 provided notice of the right to appeal; and

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83 9. Children or youths who need to obtain immunizations or immunization medical  
84 records receive assistance.

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86 ENROLLMENT/PLACEMENT

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88 MSAD 15 will determine, according to the best interest of the child or youth, whether the  
89 child or youth will be enrolled in the school of origin or in the public school in which the  
90 child or youth is actually living. In determining the best interest of the child or youth,  
91 MSAD 15 will, to the extent feasible, keep the child or youth in the school of origin,  
92 unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent.

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If the youth is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, the homeless liaison will assist in placement and enrollment decisions, with the views of the youth taken into consideration.

The school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization records, evidence of residency, or other documentation.

MSAD 15 may require a parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth to provide contact information.

MSAD 15 must provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth if MSAD 15 sends the child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or other than a school requested by the parent or guardian.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison will provide notice of the right to appeal.

The enrolling school shall contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic and other records. If the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations or immunization or medical records, the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth will be referred to the homeless liaison for assistance.

## ENROLLMENT DISPUTES

If there is a dispute concerning enrollment, the child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian will be provided, in writing, with a written explanation of the school unit's decision and the right to appeal the decision.

The homeless liaison shall ensure that an unaccompanied youth is enrolled in school, pending resolution of a dispute.

## SERVICES

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to services available to other students in the school system including, but not limited to, transportation services; educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and students with limited English proficiency; vocational and technical programs; preschool programs; before and after school-care programs; and school meals/nutrition programs.

141 TRANSPORTATION

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143 Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school  
144 where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in another school unit and the  
145 student is enrolled in MSAD 15 or if a homeless student’s school of origin is in MSAD  
146 15 but he or she is enrolled in a different school unit, the school systems will coordinate  
147 the transportation services necessary for the student, or will share the responsibilities and  
148 costs equally.

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150 RECORDS

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152 Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, medical  
153 records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for  
154 special services or programs, regarding each homeless student, shall be maintained so  
155 that records may be transferred when a student enters a new school system. Access to  
156 records will be available to parents and students in accordance with the Family  
157 Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

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161 Legal References: 42 U.S.C. § 11431-11435  
162 20-A M.R.S.A. §§ 261, 5205(7)  
163 Ch. 14 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)  
164 Maine State Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
165 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

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167 Cross Reference: JRA Student Education Records and Information