



5042.1 Education of Homeless/Foster Youth Policy

Effective Date: August 21, 2020

Approved by: Board of Directors

Policy:

The Governing Board of JCS, Inc. desires to ensure that homeless/foster students have access to the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students within the school. JCS schools shall provide homeless/foster education and other services necessary for them to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students.

Further, the Board of JCS, Inc. desires to ensure compliance with Federal and State requirements for schools serving homeless/foster students. As such, the Board affirms the following:

- The Executive Director or designee shall identify and remove any barriers to the identification and enrollment of homeless students and to the retention of homeless students due to absences or outstanding fees or fines.
- When there are at least 15 homeless/foster students in any one of the JCS schools, the school's local control and accountability plan (LCAP) shall include goals and specific actions to improve student achievement and other outcomes of homeless students.
- The Executive Director or designee shall designate an appropriate staff person to serve as a liaison for homeless/foster youth. The liaison shall fulfill the duties specified in 42 USC 11432 to assist in identifying and supporting homeless students to succeed in school.
- In order to identify students who are homeless, the Executive Director or designee may give a housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians during school registration, make referral forms readily available, include the Homeless/Foster Youth liaison's contact information on the school website, provide materials in a language easily understood by families and students, provide school staff with professional development on the definition and signs of homelessness, and contact appropriate local agencies to coordinate referrals for homeless children and youth and unaccompanied youth.
- Information about a homeless/foster student's living situation shall be considered part of a student's educational record, subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information as defined in 20 USC 1232g. (42 USC 11432)
- The Executive director or designee shall ensure that placement decisions for homeless students are based on the student's best interest as defined in law and administrative regulation.
- Each homeless/foster student shall be provided services that are comparable to services offered to other students in the school, including, but not limited to, transportation, educational programs for which the student meets the eligibility criteria (such as federal Title I services or similar state or local programs, programs for students with disabilities, and educational programs for English learners), career and technical education programs, programs for gifted and talented students, and school nutrition programs. (42 USC 11432)

- Homeless/Foster students shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way. However, the Executive Director or designee may separate homeless students on school grounds as necessary for short periods of time for health and safety emergencies or to provide temporary, special, and supplementary services to meet the unique needs of homeless students. (42 USC 11432, 11433)

Definition of Homeless Youth

A homeless student is defined as a person between the ages of birth and twenty-two who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and may:

- Live in an emergency or transitional shelter; abandoned building, parked car, or other facility not designed as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Live “doubled-up” with another family, due to loss of housing stemming from financial problems (loss of job, eviction or natural disaster);
- Live in a hotel or motel;
- Live in a trailer park or campsite with their family;
- Have been abandoned at a hospital;
- Be awaiting foster placement in limited circumstances;
- Reside in a home for school-aged, unwed mothers or mothers-to-be if there are no other available living accommodations; or
- Be migratory or abandoned, runaway, or thruway youth that qualifies as homeless because he/she is living in circumstances described above.

Definition of Foster Youth

A foster youth is defined as a student without parental support and protection, placed with a person or family to be cared for, usually by local welfare services or by court order.

Identification and Reporting

Homeless/foster children and youth will be identified through;

- The application process for enrollment (self-identification)
- School personnel recommendations
- Coordination of activities with other entities and agencies

The Executive Director or designee shall coordinate with other agencies and entities to ensure that homeless/foster children and youth are promptly identified, ensure that homeless/foster students have access to and are in reasonable proximity to available education and related support services, and raise the awareness of school personnel and service providers of the effects of short-term stays in a shelter and other challenges associated with homelessness. Toward these ends, the Executive Director or designee shall collaborate with local social service agencies, other agencies or entities providing services to homeless children and youth, and, if applicable, transitional housing facilities. In addition, the Executive Director or designee shall coordinate transportation, transfer of school records, and other collaborative activities with other local educational agencies. As necessary, the Executive Director or designee shall coordinate, within the school and with other involved local educational agencies, services for homeless students and services for students with disabilities. (42 USC 11432)

The Homeless/Foster Youth Liaison and other appropriate staff shall participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities to assist them in identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students and to provide training on the definitions of terms related to homelessness.

At least annually, the Executive Director or designee shall report to the board on outcomes for homeless/foster students, which may include, but are not limited to, student achievement test results, promotion and retention rates by grade level, graduation rates, suspension/expulsion rates, and other outcomes related to any goals and specific actions identified in the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Based on the evaluation data, the schools will revise their strategies as needed to better support the education of homeless/foster students.

Original Policy: 08/21/2020