

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN TRANSITION (HOMELESS) CHILDREN

It is the policy of the Sweetwater County School District Number One that every child will have equal access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Children who are homeless have the same rights to FAPE as do the other children, and the District is committed to assuring that those rights are fully protected and honored.

It is the policy of the District to view children as individuals. Therefore, this policy will not refer to children as homeless; it will instead use the term children and youth in transition. Under federal law, children and youth in transition must have access to appropriate public education, including preschool, and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state- and district-wide assessments and accountability systems. District schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment.

Information regarding this policy will be distributed to all students and families upon enrollment in the school calendar/enrollment guide/handbook and posted in every District school, as well as other places where children, youth, and families in transition receive services (i.e. family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in centers, welfare departments, health departments, or other social service agencies and in comprehensible formats (i.e. in Spanish).

If a school has any student who meets the following definition of children and youth in transition, please complete the attached referral sheet and send it to the Human Resources Office.

The Human Resources Office will respond to the referring school/agency to assist in developing an action plan to provide the student with a free and appropriate public education.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN TRANSITION is defined as children and youth who are otherwise legally entitled to or eligible for a free public education, including preschool, and who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and who have a primary nighttime residence including:

- children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, campgrounds, or trailer parks due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- children and youth who are living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting;
- children and youth who 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;
- migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

The terms “children and youth in transition” or “transition individual” do not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained.

In determining whether a child or youth is in transition, the relative permanence of the living arrangements should be considered. Determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis.

A child or youth will be considered to be in transition for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above.

Unaccompanied youth means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above. The general term youth also includes unaccompanied youth.

Enroll and enrollment mean attending school and participating fully in all school activities.

Parent / legal guardian means a person having legal or physical custody of a child or youth.

School of origin means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.

School Selection

Each child and youth in transition has the right to remain at his or her school of origin or to attend any school that houses students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living. Maintaining a student in his or her school of origin is important for both the student and District. Students who change schools have been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. High mobility rates also have been shown to lower test scores for stable students. Keeping students in their schools of origin enhances their academic and social growth, while permitting our schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to results from student continuity.

Therefore, in selecting a school, children and youth in transition will remain at their schools of origin to the extent feasible, or in the school where they are temporarily residing, whichever is in the request of the parent/legal guardian or youth's wishes. Students may remain at their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition and until the end of any academic year in which they become permanently housed. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing between academic years. This will be in compliance with other District policies such as class size and individual exceptions as may be made in the best interests of the student. Transportation will be provided to and from the school of origin for unaccompanied child or youth in transition for the entire time the child attends that school. The length of the commute will be considered only in determining the feasibility of placement in the school of origin based on potential harm to the student.

Children and Youth in Transitional or Emergency Shelters

If children or youth are placed in a transitional or emergency shelter because there is nowhere else to send them, and they are awaiting placement in a foster home or a home for neglected children, they will be considered a child and youth in transition while in the emergency or transition shelter. Once placed in a foster home or a home for neglected children or youth, they will no longer be considered a child and youth in transition.

Children and Youth Living in Trailer Parks and Camping Grounds

Children and youth staying temporarily in trailer parks or campgrounds because they lack adequate living accommodations will be considered a child and youth in transition. Those living in trailer parks or camp areas on a long-term basis in adequate accommodation will not be considered a child and youth in transition.

Doubled-Up Children and Youth

Children and youth who are living in “doubled-up” accommodations, that is, are sharing housing with other families or individuals, will be considered a child and youth in transition if they are doubled-up because of a loss of housing or other similar situation. Families living in doubled-up accommodations voluntarily to save money generally will not be considered a child and youth in transition.

Foster Children and Youth

In general, children and youth in foster homes will not be considered a child and youth in transition. Many foster children are in the care of a public agency, awaiting placement in more permanent situations. The foster home, although temporary, serves as a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. Children placed in foster homes for lack of shelter space, however, will be considered a child and youth in transition.

Incarcerated Children and Youth

Children and youth that are incarcerated for violation or alleged violation of a law will not be considered a child and youth in transition even if prior to their incarceration they would have been considered a child and youth in transition because they are living in inadequate accommodations. Children and youth that are under care of the state and are being held in an institution because they have no other place to live will be considered a child and youth in transition. Once these children are placed in more permanent facilities, they will no longer be considered a child and youth in transition.

Migratory Children and Youth

Migratory children will not be considered a child and youth in transition simply because they are children of migratory families. To the extent that migratory children are staying in accommodations not fit for habitation, they will be considered a child and youth in transition.

Runaways

Children or youth who have run away from home and live in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, the street or other inadequate accommodations will be considered a child and youth in transition, even if their parents have provided and are willing to provide a home for them.

School-Age, Unwed Mothers

In general, if school-age, unwed mothers or expectant mothers are living in homes for unwed mothers, and they have no other available living accommodations, they will be considered a child and youth in transition. However, if they are staying in such a home only temporarily to receive specific health care or other services, and intend to move to other adequate accommodations, they will not be considered a child and youth in transition.

Sick or Abandoned Children and Youth

There are instances where children and youth remain in a hospital beyond the time that they would normally stay for health reasons because their families have abandoned them. These children and youth will be considered a child and youth in transition because they have no other place to live. Children and youth that were a child and youth in transition prior to hospitalization will be considered to be a child and youth in transition while they are in the hospital, unless regular and adequate living accommodations will be made available to them upon release from the hospital.

Services

Children and youth in transition will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including:

- Transportation (as described above);
- Title I, Part A;
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria, including special education and related

services and programs for English language learners;

- Vocational and technical education programs;
- Gifted and talented programs; and
- Before- and after-school programs.

Disputes

A dispute resolution process is in place and the child or youth in transition and parent/legal guardian is informed of the right to appeal disputed decisions made by the District. Copies of this written notice are provided to parents/legal guardians prior to a dispute. If a dispute arises over any issue covered in this Policy, the child or youth in transition will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student in transition to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I, Part A, services while the dispute is pending. The Human Resources Office will keep records of all disputes in order to determine whether particular issues or schools are delaying or denying the enrollment of children and youth in transition repeatedly. The parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the District's decision as provided in the Wyoming's dispute resolution process.

Adopted: 5/14/01

Revised: 1/13/14

Legal References: McKinney – Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

Cross-reference: Policy JC – School Attendance Areas

Policy JC – R School Attendance Areas

School District #1, Sweetwater County, Wyoming