

R 5116 EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN

A. Definitions

1. “District liaison for the education of homeless children” means the person identified in each school district that facilitates all of the activities needed to ensure the enrollment of homeless children.
2. “District of residence” means the district in which the parent last resided prior to becoming homeless.
3. “Homeless child” means a child or youth who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate residence, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12 and N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.3.
4. “Parent” means the natural or adoptive parent, legal guardian, foster parent, surrogate parent, and person acting in the place of a parent such as the person with whom the child legally resides or a person legally responsible for the child’s welfare.
5. “Superintendent” means Superintendent and/or Chief School Administrator.

B. Determination of Homeless Status

1. The district will determine a child is homeless when he or she resides in any of the following:
 - a. A publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, including: hotels or motels; congregate shelters, including domestic violence and runaway shelters; transitional housing; and homes for adolescent mothers.
 - b. A public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, including: cars or other vehicles excluding mobile homes; tents or other temporary shelters; temporary shelters provided to migrant workers and their children on farm sites.
 - c. The residence of relatives or friends with whom the homeless child is temporarily residing out of necessity because the family lacks a regular or permanent residence of its own.

C. Responsibilities of the District of Residence

1. The district of residence for a homeless child is responsible for the education of the child and will:
 - a. Determine the district in which the child shall be enrolled after consulting with the parent pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.6;
 - b. Pay the cost of tuition pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23-3.1 when the child attends school in another district; and
 - c. Provide for transportation for the child pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:27-6.2.
2. The determination of the homeless child's district of residence will be made by the Superintendent or designee of the school district(s) involved pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.5. This determination will be based upon information received from the parent, the Department of Human Services, a shelter provider, another school district, an involved agency or a case manager.
3. The district Board of Education identified as the district of residence in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12 for a homeless child is the district of residence for as long as the parent remains homeless.

D. Designation of District Liaisons and Their Responsibilities

1. The Superintendent identifies the Director of Pupil Services as the district liaison for the education of homeless children. The liaison will facilitate communication and cooperation between the district of residence and the district where the homeless child is temporarily residing. The district liaison will develop procedures to ensure a homeless child temporarily residing in the district is enrolled and attending school pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.6.
2. When a homeless child is living temporarily in a school district, the district liaison, upon receiving notification from the parent, the Department of Human Services, a shelter director, an involved agency, or a case manager, will notify the liaison of the district of residence within twenty-four hours of the notification.
3. Upon notification of the need for enrollment of a homeless child, the liaison in the district of residence will coordinate enrollment procedures immediately based upon the best interest of the child pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.6(b).

E. District Enrollment

1. The Superintendent or designee of the district of residence will decide in which district the homeless child will be enrolled as follows:
 - a. To continue the homeless child's education in the school district of last attendance if the district of last attendance is not the district of residence;
 - b. To enroll the homeless child in the district of residence; or
 - c. To enroll the homeless child in the school district where the child is temporarily living.
2. The Superintendent of the district of residence will decide the district of enrollment of a homeless child based on what is determined to be in the best interest of the child after considering:
 - a. The continuity of the child's educational program;
 - b. The preference of the parent as to where the child should attend school;
 - c. The eligibility of the child for special instructional programs, including but not limited to bilingual, gifted and talented, special education, early childhood and vocational programs; and
 - d. The distance, travel time, and safety factors in coordinating transportation services from the temporary residence to the school.
3. The Superintendent of the district of residence will determine the child's district enrollment in a timely manner after consultation with the parent as follows:
 - a. Enrollment decisions will be made within three school days of notification of the need for enrollment. When the decision is made, the child will be enrolled immediately; and
 - b. Consultation with the parent regarding the enrollment decision and the right to appeal the decision will be documented in writing.
4. When a decision is made to enroll the child in a district other than the district of residence, the Superintendent of the district of residence will forward to the new district all relevant school and health records. When the parent is homeless due to conditions of domestic violence, the transfer of pupil records will be subject to the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.

5. When a homeless child with educational disabilities is enrolled in a district other than the district of residence, the child will be placed in a program consistent with the goals and objectives of the child's individualized educational program. Within thirty days after placement, the district where the child is placed will review and revise the individualized educational program pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14.
 6. When the district of residence for a homeless child cannot be determined, the Superintendent of the district in which the child is temporarily residing will enroll the child immediately in the district of temporary residence or the district of last attendance.
- F. Parental Rights
1. Unless parental rights have been terminated by a court of competent jurisdiction, the parent retains all rights under N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.1 et seq.
- G. Disputes and Appeals
1. If a dispute occurs regarding the determination of homelessness, the Superintendent of the involved district(s) or the parent of the child will immediately notify the County Superintendent of Schools, who will decide the status of the child within two working days. If a dispute remains between the parent and the involved district(s) following the County Superintendent's determination, the parent or the involved Board(s) of Education may appeal to the Commissioner of Education for a determination pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3.
 2. If a district designated as the district of residence disputes such designation, or where no designation can be agreed upon by the involved districts, the Superintendents of the involved districts will immediately notify the County Superintendent of Schools who will make a determination within two working days. The district may appeal the County Superintendent's determination to the Department of Education pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23-5.2 (d), (e), and (f).
 3. If a dispute occurs regarding the determination of the district of enrollment made by the district of residence, the Superintendent of the district of residence will immediately notify the County Superintendent of Schools. The County Superintendent will determine within two working days where the child will be enrolled based on the child's best interest pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.6(b).

- a. If the County Superintendent's decision is disputed, the Department of Education will provide for mediation as follows:
 - (1) The request must be made to the Department of Education in writing.
 - (2) Requests for mediation will cite the issues in dispute and the relief sought.
 - (3) A mediation conference must be conducted within five school days after the request is made at a time and place reasonably convenient to all parties in the dispute.
 - (4) If the mediation does not result in an agreement, an appeal may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3 et seq.
4. Any dispute or appeal shall not delay the homeless child's immediate entrance into school. The homeless child will be enrolled in the district designated by the County Superintendent pending resolution of the dispute or appeal.
5. Disputes and appeals involving the services provided to a homeless child with educational disabilities will be made pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14.

H. Tuition

1. If the homeless child is enrolled in a district other than the district of residence, the district of residence will pay the costs of tuition for the child to that district pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-19 and N.J.A.C. 6A:23-3.1.
2. The district of residence will list the child on its annual Application for State School Aid (ASSA) pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-33 for as long as the parent remains homeless and the child is enrolled in another school district.
3. If the district of residence cannot be determined for a homeless child or if the district of residence is outside of the State, the State will assume fiscal responsibility for the tuition of the child pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7B-12(d). The State will pay the tuition to the school district in which the child is currently enrolled for as long as the child and his or her parent remain homeless.

- a. When the State assumes fiscal responsibility for the tuition of a homeless child, the State will pay to the district in which the child is enrolled the appropriate T&E amount, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-3, and any appropriate additional cost factor for special education, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-19.