

**BLISS SCHOOL DISTRICT #234**

**Homeless Education Plan**

**2025-2026**

***Purpose***

The Homeless Assistance Act was designed to address the problems that students experiencing homelessness have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Under this program, State Educational Agencies (SEAs) must ensure that each child and youth experiencing homelessness has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youth. Students experiencing homelessness should have access to the educational and other services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. In addition, students experiencing homelessness may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.

***Definition of Services***

 Students experiencing homelessness must be provided with services that are

 comparable to services offered to other students not experiencing homelessness.

 These services include public preschool programs and educational programs or

 services for which a student experiencing homelessness meets the eligibility criteria,

 such as programs for children with disabilities, programs for students with limited

 English proficiency, vocational education, programs for gifted and talented students,

 before-and-after-school programs, school nutrition programs, and transportation.

 It is important to make sure, when identifying needed services, that ALL of the

 students’ educational needs are address. Consider what barriers to education can

 be removed by applying the Homeless Assistance Act and what is in the best

 interest of the student.

***Dissemination of Educational Rights***

The Bliss School District shall ensure that public notice of the

educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children

and youth receive services. Each school homeless liaison will be provided with posters

in English and Spanish and ensure they are visible to families and students in each of

their schools. Whenever possible, posters will also be disseminated to homeless/runaway shelters, post offices, public housing authorities, low-cost motels, faith-based organizations, libraries, welfare departments, laundromats, convenience stores, and other businesses at which families who are homeless or at risk of losing their housing may learn about their educational rights.

**OVERVIEW OF HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROCESS**

**NEW ENROLLMENTS: CURRENTLY ENROLLED:**

**Family/student completes Student is identified by self,**

 **District Enrollment Form & peer, or staff as possibly**

 **identifies self as homeless being homeless**

**Student(s) is Family/student is referred to the**

 **enrolled school’s Homeless Liaison**

 **to complete the**

**“Verifying Homeless Eligibility” form**

Family/student **IS** determined to be homeless; Homeless Liaison to complete the “Identifying Services” form.

Family/student is determined **NOT** to be homeless

Proceed with BSD enrollment and procedures

**Eligibility or School Placement Determination**

If parent/youth disagree, letter with notification, dispute process and appeals request form given to family/student

**On-going monitoring of student/family to ensure educational needs are being met and student(s) is**

**engaged in school and experiencing success**

**Homeless Liaisons’ Role**

 ***District Homeless Liaison’s Role***

* Review policies and procedures to determine if there are potential barriers for students experiencing homelessness and seek to have them revised as necessary.
* Ensure that students experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel, enroll and receive equal opportunity to succeed in school.
* Ensure that families and students experiencing homelessness receive educational services for which they are eligible.
* Assist in the resolution of disputes, ensuring that they are mediated in accordance with the state’s dispute resolution process.
* Ensure that the parents or guardians of students experiencing homelessness are fully informed of all educational rights.
* Collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators, community service providers, and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to students experiencing homelessness.
* Provide professional development at the district level to build awareness of the educational needs of students experiencing homelessness, legal responsibilities of the school and liaisons, and local policies and procedures.

**Definitions**

***Homelessness***

The Homeless Assistance Act defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack

 a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes:

* Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals.
* 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.
* Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
* Migratory children or unaccompanied youth who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

***Migratory Children***

Migrant students must have a “Certificate of Eligibility” (COE) on file in order to be considered “migrant” for educational purposes.  Local liaisons should coordinate with the district’s migrant education staff to identify migrant students eligible for homeless services through the Homeless Assistance Act.

***Unaccompanied Youth***

An unaccompanied student is a child or youth “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian”. The Act refers to *physical custody*, not *legal custody*; in practical terms, this usually means that the student is living apart from his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

Some students become homeless with their families, but end up on their own due to lack of space in temporary accommodations or shelter policies that prohibit adolescent boys. However, a student can be eligible regardless of whether he/she was asked to leave the home or “chose” to leave; sometimes there is “more than meets the eye” for a student’s home life situation.

A school cannot require a caregiver to obtain legal guardianship at any point prior to

or following an unaccompanied student’s enrollment and they cannot discontinue a student’s enrollment due to an inability to identify a caregiver, guardian, or parent following enrollment or to produce guardianship or other paperwork.

Unaccompanied youth, as verified by a local liaison, shelter worker, or other authorized person, can apply for federal financial aid using the FAFSA without a parent/guardian signature and without consideration for parent/guardian income

***School of Origin***

The school of origin is defined as the school the student attended when the student was permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

For a student that is attending a school on open enrollment and then becomes homeless, the school of origin is the school in which the student was last enrolled (the open enrollment school) and therefore has the right to continue attending if the parents request it and it’s determined in the best interest of the student.

***Power of Attorney versus Legal Guardianship***

A Power of Attorney is a document that gives one person the right to act for another person in business and legal matters, including education. A Power of Attorney is temporary and does not have to be approved by the courts or a judge. A Power of Attorney does not take away parental rights or guardianship. Although not required for caretakers of unaccompanied homeless youth, it is always best practice to obtain a Power of Attorney when possible.

A legal guardian is a person who has been appointed by a judge to take care of another person. Guardianship of a child takes away the parents’ right to make decisions about their child’s life. However, it does not permanently terminate parental rights. This means that although the guardian now has custody and is responsible for raising the child, the parents are still the child’s legal parents.

**Student Identification**

***Identification of Students Experiencing Homelessness***

Students experiencing homelessness are difficult to identify for many reasons, and thus often go unnoticed by school personnel. Students and parents may try to hide their situation because they are embarrassed by their homelessness. In addition, the fear of having children taken away often prevents families from informing school officials of their living circumstances. Often times, unaccompanied youth may not report their homeless status for fear of being returned to unsafe family environments. Children and youth who are not enrolled in school and who are not living in shelters are even more invisible to schools and their communities. Yet these children and youth must be identified as homeless if they are to enroll, attend, and succeed in school.

School personnel should avoid using the word “homeless” in *initial* contacts with families and students. For most people, the word “homeless” conjures up stereotypical images of adults, not children or youth in classrooms. Initially, students experiencing homelessness may likely not be recognized until asked if they are or know students who are staying temporarily with another family, living in motels, campgrounds, in their car, etc.

**For NEW ENROLLMENTS:**

**ENROLLMENT STAFF**

When enrolling new students have them fill out the Student Residency Survey.

* If the student/family circles E (Choices do not apply) continue normal enrollment
* If the student/family circles A,B,C or D refer them to the
* School homeless liaison who will then proceed to eligibility determination

  **For** **STUDENTS ALREADY ENROLLED:**

* **FACULTY/STAFF** being aware of common signs and

 knowing to whom to refer.

* Annual Staff In-service or Resources on the Intranet

* **OFFICE STAFF** asking questions when students move frequently or are withdrawing.
* **SELF-IDENTIFICATION** through use of posters andbrochures displayed at the school or in the community

**Eligibility**

***Verifying Eligibility of Students Experiencing Homelessness***

The District Homeless liaison is to use the ***Verifying Homeless Eligibility*** form *or* flowchart to help in determining if a student/family meets the federal definition of homeless.

* Question 1 is to determine whether or not the student/family’s current living situation qualifies them as homeless.
	+ If one of the first four choices is checked, it will likely be an automatic qualifier but continue asking clarifying questions if you are uncertain.
	+ If either of the last two are checked, the questions under “Fixed”, “Regular”,

and “Adequate” should be used to determine if it fits the Homeless Assistance

Act definition of homeless. Not all of the questions need to be asked, just what is necessary to determine if eligible or not.

* Question 2 is to determine if the student is an unaccompanied youth.
* If **YES – the student/family is homeless** is checked, complete the ***Identifying Services*** form to help you determine which services the student/family may need.
* If **NO – the student/family does NOT meet the definition of homeless,** proceed with enrollment as appropriate.

For students who are already enrolled and then identified, refer the student to the homeless liaison and complete the ***Verifying Homeless Eligibility*** and ***Identifying Services*** forms the same as above.

* ***Once a student is made eligible for homeless services under the Homeless Assistance Act, they remain eligible for services for the remainder of the school year.***
* ***Eligibility will need to be re-established at the beginning of subsequent school years.***

**Verifying Homeless Eligibility**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **Student Name:** |  | **School:** |  | **Date:** |  |

1. **Presently, where do you and/or your family sleep at night?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | in a shelter or transitional housing  |
|  |  |
|  | in a car, park, campground, public place, abandoned building, or other similar location |
|  |  |
|  | in a motel/hotel due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason |
|  |  |
|  | in housing or any vehicle (including camper) without running water, electricity, or heat |
|  |  |
|  | with another family in their home, apartment, etc., due to loss of housing, economic |
|  | hardship or similar reason; doubled-up  |
|  |  |
|  | other arrangement that is not fixed, regular, and/or adequate and is not described by the  |
|  | choices listed above (use questions below to determine if situation qualifies as homeless) |

**Fixed – stationary, permanent, and not subject to change:**

* Is this a permanent arrangement or just temporary?
* Are you looking for another place to live?
* Do you plan to move out soon?
* Why are you staying in your current place?
* Where were you living right before this place? Why did you leave?
* Where would you go if you couldn’t stay where you are?
* Are you staying with friends/relatives just for a little while?
* Did you and your friends/relatives decide to move in together and share a home and expenses for the long term? Or is this a temporary situation for you?
* Could your friends/relatives ask you to leave if they wanted to?
* Are you all sharing the home equally, or are you more like guests in the home?

 **Regular – used on a regular/nightly basis:**

* Do you stay in the same place every night?
* Do you have a key to the place where you are living?
* Do you move around a lot?
* How long have you been at that place? How long do you plan to stay?
* How long did you live in your last place?

**Adequate – sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in the home environment:**

* How many people are living in the home? How many bedrooms/bathrooms does it have?
* Are you and your children sharing a room? How many people are staying in one room?
* Are you and your children sleeping in a bedroom, or a public area, like a dining room?
* Does the home/building have heat/electricity/running water?
* What condition is the place in? Does it keep out rain and wind? Is it safe? Is it warm and dry?
* Do the windows have glass panes?
* Can you come and go as you please?

**2. Student lives with at least one (1) parent or legal guardian: YES NO**

If **NO**, student is an unaccompanied youth and student lives:  alone or with friends and no adults; or with an adult friend or relative that is not the parent or legal guardian

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **YES – student/family is homeless** (complete *Identifying Services*form) |
|  |  |
|  | **NO – student/family does NOT meet the definition of homeless** |

**Verifying Homeless Eligibility Flow Chart**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Name:** |  | **School:** |  | **Date:** |  |

 **1. Where are you and/or your family sleeping at night?**

**In a shelter or transitional housing**

**MOVE TO IDENTIFYING SERVICES FORM**

**In a car, park, campground, public place,**

 **YES**

**abandoned building, or other similar place**

**In a motel/hotel due to loss of housing,**

**economic hardship or similar reason**

**In housing or any vehicle (including camper**

**Without running water, electricity or heat**

**With another family in their home, apartment, etc., due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason; doubled-up**

**Other arrangement that is not fixed, regular, and adequate and is not described by the choices listed above**

YES**:**

Use the questions under fixed, regular and adequate to determine if situation is homeless

**NO**

**Fixed**-stationary, permanent, and not subject to change:

* Is this permanent or just temporary? Do you plan to move out soon? Are you looking for another place to live?
* Why are you staying in your current place?
* Where were you living right before this? Why did you leave your last place?
* Where would you go if you couldn’t stay where you are?
* Did you and your friends/relatives decide to move in together to share expenses for the long term?
* Could they ask you to leave if they wanted to?
* Are you sharing the home equally or are you more like quests in the home?

**Regular**-used on a regular/nightly basis:

* Do you stay in the same place every night?
* Do you have a key to the place where you are living?
* Do you move around a lot?
* How long have you been at that place? How long do you plan to stay?
* How long did you live in your last place?

**Adequate**-sufficient for meeting physical/psychological needs:

* How many people are living in the home? How many bedrooms/bathrooms are there?
* How many people are staying in one room? Do you and your children share a room?
* Are you/children in a bedroom or sleeping in a public area, like a dining room?
* What condition is the place? Does it have heat/water/electricity?
* Does it keep out rain and wind? Is it safe? Warm and dry? Do the windows have glass panes?

**. Student lives with at least one (1) parent or legal guardian**: **YES** **NO**

If **NO,** student is an unaccompanied youth and lives: alone or with friends and no adults; or

 with an adult relative or friend that is not the parent or legal guardian

**MOVE TO SERVICES FORM**

**If situation is:**

* **Temporary; Due to economic hardship**
* **Unstable; Frequent moving**
* **Overcrowded; Lack of privacy**
* **Substandard**

**HOMELESS**

**If situation is:**

* **More long-term**
* **Financially beneficial to both**
* **More permanent**
* **Adequate conditions**

**NOT HOMELESS**

**STOP**

 **RM TO SERVICES FORM**

**Identifying Services**

**School Placement** – to the extent feasible, student must be enrolled in the school of origin unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent/guardian or student, if unaccompanied youth.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | School of origin or last school attended when permanently housed: |
|  | **name of school** |  |
|  |  |
|  | school within the boundaries of where student is currently residing and where they prefer to enroll: |
|  | **name of school** |  |
|  |  |
|  | parent(s)/guardian agree with placement decision |
|  |  |
|  | parent(s)/guardian **do not** agree with placement decision  |
|  |  |
|  | **if no**, *Dispute Resolution Process* and *Appeal Request* form given; student is enrolled |

 **Immediate Enrollment**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | assisting family with obtaining necessary records or documents |
|  |  |
|  | fees associated with obtaining records or documents |

**Clothing/Personal Hygiene**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | uniform, physical education, shoes or school appropriate clothing |
|  |  |
|  | weather appropriate clothing |
|  |  |
|  | personal garments such as socks, underwear etc. |
|  |  |
|  | personal hygiene/health and beauty items |

**School Supplies and Fees**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | notebooks, pens, folders, etc. |
|  |  |
|  | class fees, registration fees |
|  |  |
|  | testing fees (AP exams, PSAT, ACT, SAT, etc.) |
|  |  |
|  | graduation expenses (cap, gown, senior pictures, yearbook, etc.) |

**Free School Meals/Food**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | immediate enrollment in free school meals program  |
|  |  |
|  | other food needs not met through community resources (CANNOT be used for any school provided food) |

**Health Care**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | medical needs, physicals, etc. |
|  |  |
|  | dental needs, examination, cleaning, etc. |
|  |  |
|  | immunizations |
|  |  |
|  | eye exam, eyeglasses, hearing aids, etc. |

**Mental Health**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | counseling for when anxiety/depression due to homelessness is impeding learning |

**Academic Needs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | tutoring  |
|  |  |
|  | summer classes, night school, approved correspondence courses, on-line classes |
|  |  |
|  | expedited evaluations for educational programs (Title 1, Head Start, Spec Ed, etc.) |
|  |  |
|  | GED testing for school age students |
|  |  |
|  | time, place/space for homework completion |

**Transportation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | arrange for bus transportation  |
|  |  |
|  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Identifying Services**

Identifying services is important to make sure we are addressing *all* of the student’s educational needs. In determining the appropriate services, consider what barriers to education can be removed by applying the Homeless Assistance Act and what is in the best interest of each student.

***School Placement***

 Students experiencing homelessness frequently move. Maintaining a stable school environment is critical to their success in school. Changing schools significantly impedes a student’s academic and social growth. It can take a highly mobile student four to six months to recover academically after changing schools. Highly mobile students have also been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools.

 To ensure this stability, school placement determinations must be made on the basis of the “best interest “of the student experiencing homelessness and, to the extent feasible, remain in the school of origin unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent/guardian or student, if an unaccompanied youth. Using this standard, the district/school must:

1. Continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during the academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or
2. Enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

School placement decisions are made at the school level and members of the team may include the student and/or parent/guardian, principal, counselor and homeless liaison

and any other person(s) familiar with the student and his/her situation. The *Written Notification of Eligibility and/or School Placement Decision* form may be completed by the homeless liaison.

***Immediate Enrollment***

Enrolling students experiencing homelessness in school immediately is a legal requirement.

The standard is within one full day of an attempt to enroll in a school, a student experiencing homelessness will be in attendance. The school selected on the basis of a “best interest determination” must enroll the student experiencing homelessness, even if the student is unable to produce the records normally required for enrollment. The enrolling school will contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic or other records. Records should be accepted directly from the family or student if available and used to aid in enrollment and placement until records are obtained from the previous school. If immunizations or medical/immunization records are needed, the school nurse, homeless liaison, or social worker will assist in obtaining the immunizations or records.

***Clothing/Personal Hygiene***

If a student is lacking or is unable to pay for shoes or clothing for physical education, sports, weather appropriate clothing, personal garments or personal hygiene items; notify the school liaison to assist with obtaining such items for the student.

***School Supplies and Fees***

Students experiencing homelessness are to have meaningful opportunities to succeed and participate fully in school activities and all educational programs and services. Therefore, they are not to be excluded from sports or elective classes due to an inability to pay. In addition, students experiencing homelessness should be provided with the necessary school supplies to actively participate in their classes.

***Free School Meals/Food***

Students experiencing homelessness are to be expeditiously enrolled for free access to the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program.

In addition to free school meals, resources are available to assist students/families with food needs unable to be met through other community resources.

***Health Care***

Students experiencing homelessness often do not receive medical attention on a regular basis, lack health care coverage, and/or the documentation to receive Medicaid. Homeless Liaisons should assist students/families with obtaining documentation and completing the application necessary for Medicaid or other health care coverage. In addition, resources are available to cover the necessary expenses of medical, dental, immunizations, eye and hearing needs while waiting for coverage.

***Mental Health***

When mental health issues arise due to homelessness and impede a student’s learning and ability to function appropriately in the school setting, the Homeless Liaison should assist the student in accessing mental health services.

***Academic Needs***

Students experiencing homelessness often fall behind due to a lack adequate time, place/space for completing homework assignments. Therefore, every effort should be made to assist the student with credit recovery, tutoring and homework assistance. In addition, evaluations for educational programs should be expedited to provide the student experiencing homelessness with the necessary services to be academically successful.

***Transportation***

Lack of transportation was cited as the number one barrier that students experiencing

homelessness face in attempting to enroll and attend school regularly. Under the Homeless Assistance Act, students experiencing homelessness are entitled to receive the services that are available to all students, including transportation. It is the liaison’s responsibility to ensure that parents and/or guardians are aware of these rights.

***Community Resources***

Whether the student/family is new to the area or a life-long resident, they may not be aware of all the available community resources. Refer them to the Health and Welfare Navigator Program.

**ANNUAL STAFF INSERVICE**

The School Homeless Liaison is responsible for providing, at least annually, in-service training to school staff including administration, certified and classified staff on the Homeless Assistance Act, identification and eligibility, and available services for students experiencing homelessness.

**DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

***Dispute Resolution***

If a dispute arises over eligibility for homeless services and/or school selection, the district/school must enroll the student experiencing homelessness in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent or guardian, pending resolution of the dispute. It is critical that students not be kept out of school. Interruption in education can severely disrupt the student’s academic progress.

Families and students experiencing homelessness may be unaware of their right to challenge eligibility, placement and enrollment decisions. Therefore, the district/school must provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written statement of the eligibility and/or school placement decision, the right to appeal, and the process in which to do so. Written notice protects both the student and school by outlining the specific reason(s) for the school’s decision. It facilitates dispute resolution by providing decision-makers with documents to guide their determination.

The District Education of the Homeless Children #1002 should be followed and implemented according to the HOMELESS STUDENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS.

**Written Notification of Eligibility and/or School Placement Decision**

**To be completed by the receiving or current school when eligibility for homelessness and/or an enrollment request by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth is denied.**

**In compliance with the Homeless Assistance Act, the following written notification is provided to:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): |  |
|  |
| Name of Student(s): |  |

After reviewing your situation and/or request to enroll or continue enrollment of the student(s) listed above, the Team has determined that either you do not qualify for homeless services and/or it is *not* in the best interest of the student to enroll or remain at this school. This determination was based upon:

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

You have the right to appeal this decision by completing the attached page or by contacting the school’s homeless education liaison.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of school liaison: |  |
|  |
| Phone number and e-mail: |  |

In addition:

* The student(s) listed above has the right to enroll or continue enrollment in the requested school pending the resolution of the dispute.
* You may provide written or verbal communication to support your position regarding homeless status and/or the student’s enrollment or continued enrollment in the requested school. Please use the form accompanying this notification.
* You may contact the District Homeless Education Liaison if further help is needed or desired. The Liaison can be reached at **208-352-4445**.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of person completing form: |  | Date: |  |
|  |
| Title of person completing form: |  | School: |  |
|  |
| Principal Signature: |  |