

# **CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

## **HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN**



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## **CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM HOMELESS EDUCATION**

### **STATEMENTS OF INTENT:**

The Choctaw County School System shall ensure that homeless children and youth will have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as other children and youth. The school district shall employ practices that remove barriers to enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth. The lack of enrollment documents will not be used to prevent homeless children and youth from enrolling in school.

Homeless children and youth shall 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. Services to these students shall be provided in the mainstream school environment in a nondiscriminatory manner. The Choctaw County School System shall take steps to ensure that homeless children and youth are not stigmatized and/or alienated due to their homeless status.

The Choctaw County School System shall designate a homeless liaison to serve as the primary contact between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers, and other service providers. The liaison shall coordinate services to ensure that homeless children and youth are expeditiously enrolled in school and have the opportunity to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as their non-homeless counterparts.

The Choctaw County School System shall make school placement decisions on the basis of the “best interest” of the homeless child or youth. The district shall, to the extent feasible:

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

The district shall keep a homeless child or youth in the “school of origin” unless doing so is contrary to the best interest of the child. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the district shall immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth pending resolution of the dispute. The school district shall provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written statement of the school placement decision and their appeal rights.

The Choctaw County School System shall employ practices to ensure that transportation is provided at the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to or from the “school of origin” in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines.

The Choctaw County School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of the Homeless Education program. The district shall notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources.

The Choctaw County School System shall conduct an annual evaluation of its homeless education program to determine effectiveness and project future needs. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement.

## **DEFINITION:**

For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Choctaw County School System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines homeless children and youth (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

- Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
  - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
  - 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 who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

The term ***unaccompanied youth*** includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing and children, youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as “throwaway” children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available.

The ***school of origin*** is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

## CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN

### **Purpose of the Program**

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. The program will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academic and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non-homeless students.

The program provides procedural guidelines to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrollment. Homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, will be enrolled immediately; there will be no barriers to their enrollment. The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining documentation.

The homeless education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the *school of origin* and providing them with transportation to and from the school of origin. Provisions are made for parents guardians, or unaccompanied youth to decline enrollment in the *school of origin*. Best interest determination guidelines will be used in the decision making process.

The program provides for a homeless liaison, who will ensure program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, are provided the opportunity for academic success.

### **Identification & Registration Procedures**

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The district will conduct training sessions with the appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without using stigmatizing terminology. The district will use a *Residency Questionnaire* (Appendix A) to facilitate identity of homeless children and youth and preschoolers. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will complete the *Residency Questionnaire* at the time of registration. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the *Residency Questionnaire* must be submitted to the Choctaw County Homeless Liaison on the day of registration where box A indicates a possible homeless situation. The school will maintain the original form in a file separate from the student's permanent record for audit purposes during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor's office.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth with or *without* proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record, or school records. The school counselor or principal's designee will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the records and documents for enrollment at a later date, where necessary. No homeless students will be denied enrollment due to lack of an immunization record. The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied

youth in obtaining immunization and/or records. The existing method of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll himself or herself. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the Choctaw County Homeless Liaison to report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in language that the student understands. The Choctaw County Homeless Liaison (Appendix B) will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services.

### **Identification of Homeless Preschoolers**

The Choctaw County Homeless Liaison will collaborate with local community service agencies (e.g. Head Start, Department of Human Resources, Health Department, faith-based organizations and the court system, etc.) and school personnel to identify homeless preschoolers. The district will also include homeless preschoolers and homeless children in the “Child Find” process as required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

### **School Placement**

The school system will make school placement decisions in the “best interest” of the homeless child or youth. Students will continue in the *school of origin* for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. Students may enroll 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.

If school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth’s parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a School Enrollment Dispute (Appendix C) with the school in which the student is presently enrolled. The principal of this school will notify the Choctaw County Homeless Liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The Choctaw County Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute (See Appendix D). If the dispute cannot be settled by the homeless liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from an appropriate service agency.

### **Educational Services**

Homeless children and youth are automatically eligible for Title I services. All schools in the district are Title I schoolwide schools. Thus, homeless children and youth will receive access to all educational programs and other services provided. Homeless children and youth must meet

traditional eligibility requirements that are required of non-homeless students for specialized services such as special education, gifted and talented, English language learner, and 504 services.

Schools may not impose additional requirements of homeless children or youth for participation in non-specialized programs that are available to their non-homeless counterparts.

### **Transportation**

The Choctaw County Homeless Liaison will collaborate with the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, school personnel, and transportation supervisor to coordinate transportation services for homeless children and youth. The school system will determine the mode of transportation.

As a general rule, transportation services will be provided to enable the student to continue educational services in the *school of origin* during the academic year, unless the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth makes a request to attend a different school.

If the homeless child or youth continues his or her education in the *school of origin* but begins living in an area served by another school system, the Choctaw County Homeless Liaison will seek a method of apportioning the responsibility and cost for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin with the new school system. If an agreement cannot be arranged, the responsibility and costs for transportation will be shared equally, or the state department of education will be contacted for technical assistance in resolving the issue. Parents have the right to submit a written complaint and proposed solution. Complaints that cannot be resolved will be forwarded to the Alabama State Department of Education, Federal Programs Section at 50 North Ripley Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36130.

The Choctaw County Homeless Liaison will train school personnel and bus drivers on the rights and needs of homeless students, as well as on the need for sensitivity and confidentiality.

### **Program Evaluation**

Standards and indicators suggested by the National Center for Homeless Education (Appendix E) will be used to evaluate McKinney-Vento actions should Choctaw County School System receive grant funds. Otherwise, the system will use the established program evaluation tool (Appendix F) when Title I funds are used to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness. Annual evaluation will be conducted to determine program effectiveness and to inform program planning for the next year. Necessary program adjustment and implementation practices will be made to improve student services and attendance achievement.

# **APPENDIXES**

**APPENDIX A – RESIDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE**

**APPENDIX B – CHOCTAW COUNTY HOMELESS LIAISON**

**APPENDIX C – SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM**

**APPENDIX D – DISTRICT ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM**

**APPENDIX E – EVALUATION STANDARDS**



APPENDIX A

Revised August 2017

CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM  
RESIDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_  Male  Female Current Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Student Identification Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Month Day Year

Name of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother/Guardian Telephone Number

Father/Guardian Telephone Number

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_  
E-911 Address (Street Address)

City

State

Zip Code

1. Where is the student currently living?

Section A	Section B
<input type="checkbox"/> In a shelter	The choices in Section A do not apply  <i>If you checked this section, STOP here. You do not need to complete the remainder of this form. Submit the form to school personnel.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> With more than one family in a house or apartment	
<input type="checkbox"/> In a motel, car, or campsite	
<input type="checkbox"/> With friends or family members (other than parent /guardian)	
<i>If you checked a box in Section A, CONTINUE to item number 2 and complete the remainder of this form.</i>	

2. The student lives with:

- 1 parent  a relative, friend(s) or other adult(s)
- 2 parents  alone with no adult(s)
- 1 parent and another adult  an adult that is not the parent or the legal guardian

Previous Address \_\_\_\_\_  
E-911 Address (Street Address)

City

State

Zip Code

Signature of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) \_\_\_\_\_

<b>School System Use Only-Do Not Write in this Space.</b>			
<i>Section A: fax this form to the Central Office Contact Person on the day of enrollment.</i>			
_____ Counselor's Signature	_____ Date	_____ Principal's Signature	_____ Date
<b>Status Determination</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Qualifies for services under McKinney-Vento		<input type="checkbox"/> Does not qualify for services under McKinney-Vento	
_____ Homeless Liaison's Signature		_____ Date	
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Nutrition Program Notified		_____ CNP Director's Signature	
		_____ Date	

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CHOCTAW COUNTY HOMELESS LIAISON**

The homeless liaison shall work to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschoolers are identified, enrolled in school, and receive all eligible services to facilitate student academic success. The responsibilities listed below are not all inclusive but shall be primary duties of the liaison. The homeless liaison shall ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the district;
- Homeless children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, and preschool programs administered by the school system, and referrals to health, mental health, dental and other appropriate services;
- Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services;
- Transportation cost disputes between the school system and school system of enrollment are resolved;
- Sensitivity and confidentiality training is provided to transportation and school personnel regarding the needs of homeless children and youth;
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney – Vento Act;
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated to locations where children and youth receive services under the Act;
- Required reports concerning the homeless education program are submitted to appropriate agencies and the State Department of Education; and
- Evaluation of the homeless education program is conducted annually and necessary program and implementation adjustments are made in a timely manner.

APPENDIX C

CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM

School Name
School Address
School Telephone Number
School Fax Number

Student's Name SN Grade

Current Address
E-911 Address (Street Address)
City State Zip Code
Current Telephone Number

Complainant Information

Name Relationship to the Student
Please print
Current Address
City State Zip Code Telephone Number

Note: Student information regarding address, telephone number, information protected by Everyday School Records Act can be released only to parent, guardian, the student, or a person specifically designated as a representative of the parent or guardian.

Name of school that complainant chooses student to be immediately enrolled in and/or transported to/from until dispute is resolved:

Is this the school of origin?
If no, from which school was the student transferred?

Reason for the complaint

Complainant Signature Date

School Use Only

Principal's Action on the Complaint

Taken within school days(s) after receiving notice of the complaint.
Date central office contact person was notified of the dispute:
Action taken by the principal to resolve the dispute:

Was the dispute resolved? If not, enter the date the complaint was forwarded to the Homeless Liaison.

Fax this form to the central office contact person on the day of the complaint.

**APPENDIX D**

**CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM  
DISTRICT ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM**

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ SSN/SN \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

**District Action on Complaint**

Taken within \_\_\_\_\_ school days after receiving notice of the complaint. Was the complaint resolved at the district level? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

If the dispute was resolved at the district level, describe the action taken by the county homeless liaison to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the complainant:

If the dispute was not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, did the county homeless liaison convene a meeting of the interested parties to attempt resolution of the dispute? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no  
If yes, when and where did the meeting take place? Describe the outcome of the meeting.

If no, will a meeting be held for resolution purposes? When? Where?

If a resolution cannot be derived at the district level, the county homeless liaison should assist the complainant in contacting service organizations to provide technical assistance to the complainant. Did the county homeless liaison assist the complainant in this manner? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Name of service organization contacted for assistance \_\_\_\_\_

Was the dispute resolved? \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the resolution.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Complainant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Choctaw County Homeless Liaison

If the complaint was not resolved, enter the date the complaint was forwarded to the Alabama State Department of Education, Federal Programs Section at 50 North Ripley Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36130 \_\_\_\_\_.

## APPENDIX E

### McKinney- Vento EVAUATION STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

<b>STANDARD</b>		<b>EVIDENCE</b>
1	Within one (1) full day of an attempt to enroll in school, homeless children and youth will be in attendance.	
2	Homeless pre-k to 12 children and youth will have stability in school.	
2.1	Attendance rates will be at or above the relevant district average.	
2.2	Students will remain in the school of origin for the period of homelessness or, if permanently housed, for the remainder of the school year, unless parents or unaccompanied youth requested transfer to another school.	
3	Homeless children and youth will receive specialized services when eligible.	
3.1	Eligible homeless preschool children can participate in public preschool (Head Start, state pre-k, preschool programs for children with disabilities under IDEA, meals, programs for children with limited English proficiency, and Title I pre-school programs).	
3.2	Eligible homeless children and youth can receive special education and related services under IDEA, educational and related aids and services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.	
3.3	Homeless children and youth will receive appropriate services, based on assessment of individual needs, through a combination of resources, including, but not limited to Title I, McKinney-Vento, and other federally funded programs.	
4	Parents or persons acting as parents of homeless children and youth will participate meaningfully in their children's education.	
4.1	Parents or persons acting as parents will have a face –to-face conference with the teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker within 30 days of enrollment.	
4.2	Parents or persons acting as parents will be provided with individual student reports informing them of their child's specific academic needs and achievement on academic assessments aligned with state academic achievement standards.	

<b>STANDARD</b>		<b>EVIDENCE</b>
4.3	Parents or persons acting as parents will report monitoring or facilitating homework assignments.	
4.4	Parents or persons acting as parents will share reading time with their children (i.e., parent reads to child or listens to child read).	
4.5	Parents who would like parent skills training will attend available programs.	
4.6	Parents or guardians will demonstrate awareness of McKinney rights.	
4.7	Unaccompanied youth will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento rights.	
5	Homeless children and youth in grades 3-12 will meet their state's academic standards.	
5.1	Performance on standards-based assessments in reading and math will be within or above the proficient range or will show a one-for-one gain.	
5.2	Rates of promotion to the next grade level will be at or above the district average.	
5.3	Rates of high school graduation or equivalent will be at or above the district average.	
<b>PROGRAM COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		

**APPENDIX F**

**Program Evaluation Planning and Reporting Template**

<b>Program: Title I HOMELESS EDUCATION SET ASIDE</b>			<b>FY:</b>
<b>Planning</b>			<b>End-of-the-Year Results</b>
<b>Fund Source(s)</b>	<b>Key Strategies/ Actions</b> (from eGAP)	<b>Performance Measurements</b> (from eGAP) (Short-term, intermediate, long-term impacts – as appropriate)	<b>Impacts; Data Supporting Impacts</b>