

# **MISSOURI STATE PLAN FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

## **PURPOSE**

Title VII-B, Education for Homeless Children and Youth, of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney Act - P. L. 107-110) provides State Educational Agencies (SEAs) with grant funds to carry out policies to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to a free, appropriate public education (including a public preschool education), provided to the children of a resident of a state and is consistent with the state school attendance laws. States are to review and revise the residency requirements of their compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices or policies that may act as a barrier, to assure that homeless children within the state are afforded a free and appropriate education, ensuring that such children and youths have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state student academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

## **DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of the State Plan, the following definitions apply:

A homeless individual is one who:

- A. lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- B. includes--
  - i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
  - ii. children and youths 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 (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
  - iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings

The first category may include some individuals who have moved in with others. Consideration of each individual case, along with the permanency of the situation, will be needed in order to identify those who are homeless.

The term "enroll" and "enrollment" includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

Unaccompanied Youth –a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

## State Plan

### Section 722(g) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act:

#### (g) STATE PLAN-

(1) **IN GENERAL-** Each State shall submit to the Secretary a plan for the education of homeless children and youths within the State. Such plan shall include the following:

**(A) A description of how such children and youths are (or will be) given the opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic achievement standards all students are expected to meet.**

Students experiencing homelessness in Missouri are not segregated from their housed peers on the basis of their homelessness and are included in the appropriate educational programs, including compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged, educational programs for the handicapped; programs for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational education, programs for the gifted and talented, preschool programs, and school meal programs.

Students experiencing homelessness are to be included in all regular school assessments.

**(B) A description of the procedures the State Educational Agency will use to identify such children and youths in the State and to assess their special needs.**

A Homeless Children and Youth Census is conducted every three years, with information gathered from shelters and school districts. Once the information is gathered, it is distributed on the department's website in order to develop an enhanced statewide understanding of the needs of Missouri's identified homeless children and youth.

In order to receive the most accurate count possible for the homeless census, shelters are asked to count children Pre K and those that may have dropped out of school. The school districts are asked to count those children enrolled in school that meet the definition of homeless children and youth.

The method our department uses for conducting the homeless children and youth census has also enabled the needs of the homeless to be better identified. The shelter is able to list what they see as special needs of the homeless, and the school district is able to list what they see as special needs of the homeless. As a result, the school district and shelter are both becoming more in tune with the specific needs of Missouri's homeless children and youth they each address.

**(C) A description of procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youths.**

Every school district in the state must designate a board appointed Homeless Coordinator. The homeless coordinator must work to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free public education as is provided to other children and youth. The district Homeless Coordinator's responsibilities include:

1. assist with immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth and provide assistance with obtaining academic and medical records;
2. make school placement decisions based on the best interest of the child and wishes of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth (if the school of best interest is different than the parent or guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth's wishes, then a written statement explaining the school placement decision and the appeal rights must be provided to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth);
3. handle enrollment disputes (homeless children or youth must be enrolled in the school in which the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth seeks enrollment during the dispute and the coordinator will carry out the state's grievance procedure as quickly as possible after receiving notice of the dispute);
4. prohibit the segregation of homeless children and youth;
5. provide/arrange transportation and inform the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth of the transportation services the school district must make available and assist the homeless children and youth in accessing transportation to and from school;
6. inform parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth of the educational and related opportunities available to them;
7. disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth in places where homeless children and youth receive services (soup kitchens, shelters, salvation army, school, PAT areas, food pantries, community organizations, etc.). (The school district and phone number of the homeless coordinator may also be listed on the notice for contact information.)

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, and guardianship.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identification of homeless children and youths, and the district identifying a working homeless coordinator.

**(D) A description of programs for school personnel (including principals, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and pupil services personnel) to heighten the awareness of such personnel of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youths.**

The following efforts to build awareness have been undertaken by the Missouri Department of Education:

- Posters and brochures explaining the educational rights of homeless children and youths have been distributed to all public schools. The posters have a space for each homeless coordinator to provide their contact information.
- A homeless coordinator update is sent out to all school districts at the beginning of each school year informing them of upcoming meetings, web site changes/additions, and program and legislation changes.
- At the beginning of each school year the school districts report to our department the name and contact information of their homeless coordinator. This information is entered into e-mail groups according to regions of the state. The State Homeless Coordinator uses this as a way to easily inform homeless coordinators of in-service training, provided by the department, meetings, and program updates throughout the school year.
- Our department's web page contains information the State Homeless Coordinator gathers from recently attended trainings/workshops including possible in-service training ideas for the local level, district homeless coordinator responsibilities, federal guidance on homeless issues, ice breaker activities for use when districts and community agencies meet, and other educational information pertinent to the homeless children and youth program.
- The State Homeless Coordinator has worked with shelter directors, legal services, and district homeless coordinators to develop a booklet entitled "Keeping Kids in School: The Educational Rights of Homeless Children". The booklet is in easy to read and understand format and is posted in generic form on the department's website. An updated version of the "Keeping Kids in School" booklet will be made available before the start of the new school year. There has been an overwhelming response for additional copies of this booklet across the state.
- The Administrative Manual for Federal Discretionary Programs contains valuable information on identification of homeless children and youths, responsibilities of the homeless coordinator, school assignment and placement of homeless children and youth, school records, testing, immunization, providing comparable services, transportation, grant funding, staff development, and use of local Title I funds. This manual is mailed to each district in the state and is available on the website.
- The State Homeless Coordinator will create a booklet/brochure for school districts and service providers, explaining steps to be taken when enrolling a

homeless child or youth.

**(E) A description of the procedures that ensure that homeless children and youths who meet the relevant eligibility criteria are able to participate in Federal, State, or local food programs.**

Recent updates from the US Department of Agriculture pertaining to homeless children and youths eligible to participate in Federal, State, or local food programs have been distributed at homeless coordinator and service provider meetings.

Food program updates received at the March 2002 US Department of Education State Homeless Coordinator's Meeting and recent information shared via the homeless education listserv will be disseminated in the 2002-2003 homeless coordinator update and e-mail updates to local homeless coordinators.

**(F) A description of procedures that ensure that—**

- (i) homeless children have equal access to the same public preschool programs, administered by the State agency, as provided to other children in the State;**
- (ii) homeless youths and youths separated from the public schools are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services; and**
- (iii) homeless children and youths who meet the relevant eligibility criteria are able to participate in Federal, State, or local before-and after-school care programs.**

Renew participation in the Head Start Collaborative to develop a working relationship and facilitate preschoolers in homeless situations to be able to access Head Start. The State Homeless Coordinator and the Director of Head Start have both attended The Governor's Task Force on Homelessness and collaboration has begun to develop.

The Administrative Manual for Federal Discretionary Programs contains valuable information on identification of homeless children and youths, responsibilities of the homeless coordinator, school assignment and placement of homeless children and youth, school records, testing, immunization, providing comparable services (including preschool programs), transportation, grant funding, staff development, and use of local Title I funds. This manual is mailed to each district in the state and is available on the website.

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, and guardianship.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identify homeless children and youths, and the district identification of a working homeless coordinator.

Students experiencing homelessness in Missouri are not segregated from their housed peers on the basis of their homelessness and are included in the appropriate educational programs, including compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged, educational programs for the handicapped, programs for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational education, programs for the gifted and talented, preschool programs, and school meal programs.

**(G) Strategies to address problems identified in the report provided to the Secretary under subsection (f)(3).**

The 1999-2000 Homeless Children and Youth Census included identification of barriers and problems currently being experienced by homeless children and youths. In addition to issues addressed in earlier sections, major needs identified and the level to which the needs were met included:

1. Transportation- major need- currently being addressed at the state level through the use of homeless transportation reimbursement (for all districts not currently participating in a homeless children and youth grant). (Those districts receiving the homeless children and youth grant may include transportation in their grant application.)
2. Staff Development on Homeless Issues- major need- currently being addressed at the state level through in-service trainings and web site information offered by the State Homeless Coordinator's Office.
3. Policy Revision to Facilitate Enrollment- major need- currently being addressed at the state level through the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) monitoring process.
4. Agency Coordination- moderate need- currently being addressed at the state level through the attendance/participation at regional homeless coordinator and service provider quarterly meetings, e-mail regional group updates, and an added requirement for homeless children and youth grant recipients of collaboration.

These services are allowable activities for subgrants.

It is foreseeable that with the addition/defining of local homeless coordinator responsibilities, each of the local homeless coordinators will be taking more active roles in the educational opportunities of their district's homeless children and youths.

**(H) Strategies to address other problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youths, including problems resulting from enrollment delays that are caused by—**

- (i) Immunization and medical records requirements;**
- (ii) Residency requirements;**
- (iii) Lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation;**
- (iv) Guardianship issues; or**
- (v) Uniform or dress code requirements.**

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immunization, residency,

records, and guardianship.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identification of homeless children and youths, and the district identification of a working homeless coordinator.

The homeless coordinators are invited to receive training by the State Homeless Coordinator regarding immunization, records requirements, lack of birth certificates, school records, other documentation and residency issues.

The State Homeless Coordinator provides updates on these issues through the use of e-mail, or the homeless coordinator update mailed out at the beginning of each school year.

The Administrative Manual for Federal Discretionary Programs contains valuable information on identification of homeless children and youths, responsibilities of the homeless coordinator, school assignment and placement of homeless children and youth, school records, testing, immunization, providing comparable services, transportation, grant funding, staff development, and use of local Title I funds. This manual is mailed to each Superintendent in each school district in the state and is available on the website.

**(I) A demonstration that the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youths in the State.**

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place, and must revise these policies and procedures as necessary, stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, and guardianship.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identification of homeless children and youths, and the district identification of a working homeless coordinator.

Every school district in the state must designate a board appointed Homeless Coordinator. The homeless coordinator must work to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free public education as is provided to other children and youth.

**(J) Assurances that—**

- (i) the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State will adopt policies and practices to ensure that homeless children and youths are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless;**

- (ii) **local educational agencies will designate an appropriate staff person, who may also be a coordinator for other Federal programs, as a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths, to carry out the duties described in paragraph (6)(A); and**
- (iii) **the State and its local educational agencies will adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), to and from the school of origin, as determined in paragraph (3)(A), in accordance with the following, as applicable:**
  - (A) **If the homeless child or youth continues to live in the area served by the local educational agency in which the school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to and from school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to and from the school of origin shall be provided or arranged by the local educational agency in which the school of origin is located.**
  - (B) **If the homeless child's or youth's living arrangements in the area served by the local educational agency of origin terminate and the child or youth, through continuing his or her education in the school of origin, begins living in an area served by another local educational agency, the local educational agency of origin and the local educational agency in which the homeless child or youth is living shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the local educational agencies are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.**

Students experiencing homelessness in Missouri are not segregated from their housed peers on the basis of their homelessness and are included in the appropriate educational programs, including compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged, educational programs for the handicapped, programs for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational education, programs for the gifted and talented, preschool programs, and school meal programs.

Every school district in the state must designate a board appointed Homeless Coordinator. The Homeless Coordinator may also be a coordinator for other Federal programs. Responsibilities of the homeless coordinator include working to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free public education as is provided to other children and youth, and working to ensure that any/all barriers are removed so the homeless children and youths in their districts receive the education they are entitled to. (Specific coordinator responsibilities are included in 1(C) of this State Plan.)

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students'

education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, and guardianship.

It may be in the student's best interest to continue enrollment in the school of origin. To the extent feasible, a homeless child or youth should remain in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian. It may, however, be in the child's or youth's best interest to enroll in the school of the attendance area of the current residence. In determining the best interests of the child or youth, the local education agency shall comply, to the extent feasible, with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school selection.

The choice regarding assignment shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parents, or whether the child or youth is unaccompanied. If the school district sends a child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, the school district shall provide a written explanation including the right to appeal the decision, to the parent or guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless coordinator (designated by the school district) shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions while considering the views of the unaccompanied youth and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal.

If a student becomes homeless during the school year and temporarily resides in a different attendance area, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth and the district Homeless Coordinator should decide whether or not it is in the student's best interest to remain at the school of origin.

When the school of origin is in a school district different from the one in which the homeless student is temporarily residing and a determination is made that the student should remain at the school of origin, transportation may be provided. A contractual agreement must exist between the resident school district and the school district in which the school of origin is located, for the intention of transporting the homeless student. Both districts must equally split the cost of transporting a homeless student to the school of origin, or if the school of origin is not determined to be in the best interest of the child, to the school of best interest.

Funds have been set-aside at DESE for the reimbursement of the excess cost of transporting homeless children and youth to the school of origin/best interest. These funds are reserved for the districts that did not receive a homeless grant. Districts receiving a homeless grant should include transportation reimbursement into their original grant.

**(2) COMPLIANCE-**

**(A) IN GENERAL- Each plan adopted under this subsection shall also describe how the State will ensure that local educational agencies in the State will comply with the requirements of paragraphs (3) through (7).**

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, and guardianship.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identification of homeless children and youths, and the district identification of a working homeless coordinator.

When noncompliance does occur, the State Homeless Coordinator offers technical assistance until compliance is met.

**(B) COORDINATION-Such plan shall indicate what technical assistance the State will furnish to local educational agencies and how compliance efforts will be coordinated with the local educational agency liaisons designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii).**

A homeless coordinator update is sent out to all school districts at the beginning of each school year informing them of upcoming meetings, web site changes/additions, and program and legislation changes.

At the beginning of each school year the school districts report to our department the name and contact information of their homeless coordinator. This information is entered into e-mail groups according to regions of the state. The State Homeless Coordinator uses this as a way to easily inform homeless coordinators of in-service training (provided by the department), meetings, and program updates throughout the school year.

Our department's web page contains information the State Homeless Coordinator brings back from attended trainings/workshops (including possible in-service training ideas for the local level), district homeless coordinator responsibilities, federal guidance on homeless issues, ice breaker activities for use when districts and community agencies meet, and other educational information pertinent to the homeless children and youth program.

The State Homeless Coordinator has worked with shelter directors, legal services, and district homeless coordinators to develop a booklet entitled "Keeping Kids in

School: The Educational Rights of Homeless Children.” The booklet is in easy to read and understand format and is posted in generic form on the department’s website. An updated version of the “Keeping Kids in School” booklet will be made available before the start of the new school year. There has been an overwhelming response for additional copies of this booklet across the state.

The Administrative Manual for Federal Discretionary Programs contains valuable information on identification of homeless children and youths, responsibilities of the homeless coordinator, school assignment and placement of homeless children and youth, school records, testing, immunization, providing comparable services, transportation, grant funding, staff development, and use of local Title I funds. This manual is mailed to each district in the state and is available on the website.

The State Homeless Coordinator will create a booklet/brochure for school districts and service providers explaining steps to be taken when enrolling a homeless child or youth.

When noncompliance does occur, the State Homeless Coordinator offers technical assistance until compliance is met.

The State Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths will be posted on the Homeless Children and Youth web page for public review and access.

### **(3) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY REQUIREMENTS-**

**(A) IN GENERAL-The local educational agency serving each child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall, according to the child’s or youth’s best interest-**

- (i) Continue the child’s or youth’s education in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness—**
  - (A) in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or**
  - (B) for the remainder of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or**
- (ii) 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.**

It may be in the student’s best interest to continue enrollment in the school of origin. To the extent feasible, a homeless child or youth should remain in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child’s or youth’s parent or guardian. It may, however, be in the child’s or youth’s best interest to enroll in the school of the attendance area of the current residence. In determining the best interests of the child or youth, the local education agency shall comply, to the extent feasible, with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school selection.

The choice regarding assignment shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parents, or whether the child or youth is unaccompanied. If the school district sends a child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, the school district shall provide a written explanation including the right to appeal the decision, to the parent or guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless coordinator (designated by the school district) shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions while considering the views of the unaccompanied youth and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal.

If a student becomes homeless during the school year and temporarily resides in a different attendance area, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth and the district Homeless Coordinator should decide whether or not it is in the student's best interest to remain at the school of origin.

When the school of origin is in a school district different from the one in which the homeless student is temporarily residing and a determination is made that the student should remain at the school of origin, transportation may be provided. A contractual agreement must exist between the resident school district and the school district in which the school of origin is located, for the intention of transporting the homeless student. Both districts must equally split the cost of transporting a homeless student to the school of origin, or if the school of origin is not determined to be in the best interest of the child, then to the school of best interest.

- (B) BEST INTEREST-In determining the best interest of the child or youth under subparagraph (A), the local educational agency shall—**
- (i) to the extent feasible, keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian;**
  - (ii) provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal under subparagraph (E), to the homeless child's or youth's parent or guardian, if the local educational agency sends such child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian; and**
  - (iii) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the homeless liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii) assists in placement or enrollment decisions under this subparagraph, considers the views of such unaccompanied youth, and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal under subparagraph (E).**

It may be in the student's best interest to continue enrollment in the school of origin. To the extent feasible, a homeless child or youth should remain in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian. It may, however, be in the child's or youth's best interest to enroll in the school of the attendance area of the current residence. In determining the best interests of the child or youth, the local education agency shall comply, to

the extent feasible, with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school selection.

The choice regarding assignment shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parents, or whether the child or youth is unaccompanied. If the school district sends a child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, the school district shall provide a written explanation including the right to appeal the decision, to the parent or guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless coordinator (designated by the school district) shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions while considering the views of the unaccompanied youth and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal.

If a student becomes homeless during the school year and temporarily resides in a different attendance area, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth and the district Homeless Coordinator should decide whether or not it is in the student's best interest to remain at the school of origin.

When the school of origin is in a school district different from the one in which the homeless student is temporarily residing and a determination is made that the student should remain at the school of origin, transportation may be provided. A contractual agreement must exist between the resident school district and the school district in which the school of origin is located, for the intention of transporting the homeless student. Both districts must equally split the cost of transporting a homeless student to the school of origin, or if the school of origin is not determined to be in the best interest of the child, then to the school of best interest.

**(C) ENROLLMENT-**

- (i) the school selected in accordance with this paragraph shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation.**
- (ii) the enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic and other records.**
- (iii) if the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the child or youth to the local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records, in accordance with subparagraph (D).**

The homeless child or youth shall be immediately enrolled even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation. The

term "enroll" and "enrollment" includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the child needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the district homeless coordinator who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations or medical records.

Assist with immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth and provide assistance with obtaining academic and medical records.

**(D) RECORDS-Any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization or medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding each homeless child or youth shall be maintained—**

- (i) so that the records are available, in a timely fashion, when a child or youth enters a new school or school district; and**
- (ii) in a manner consistent with section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232 g)**

Schools must use great care in maintaining and keeping up-to-date records on children identified as homeless. Given the transience of homeless students, copies of cumulative records, or other evidence of placement or special needs, may be given to the parent as allowed under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Upon the enrollment of a homeless child, a school is encouraged to accept copies of records, or other evidence of placement provided by the child's parent, for purposes of immediate placement and delivery of education and support services.

Thereafter, the receiving school should request copies of the official records from the school of origin. The availability of records to requesting school districts should be handled as expeditiously as possible. It is recommended that school districts use such avenues as the telephone, fax machines and express mail services for verification of test scores, immunization records, and program eligibility, with the understanding that for those records transferred by electronic means, a hard copy of the document will be mailed as quickly as possible.

Lack of school records must not delay the enrollment of a homeless child. If a parent or caregiver needs to request/obtain another copy of a child's birth certificate, a reasonable amount of time should be given to the parent or caregiver to do so.

The district homeless coordinator will assist with immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth and provide assistance with obtaining academic and medical records.

**(E) ENROLLMENT DISPUTES-If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school—**

- (i) the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute;**
- (ii) the parent or guardian of the child or youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision;**
- (iii) the child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as described in paragraph (1)(C) as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and**
- (iv) in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.**

The district homeless coordinator will handle enrollment disputes (homeless children or youth must be enrolled in the school in which the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth seeks enrollment during the dispute and the coordinator will carry out the state's grievance procedure as quickly as possible after receiving notice of the dispute).

Professional development activities should be provided for school personnel that are designed to heighten their sensitivity to the needs of homeless children and youth, the rights of such children and youth, and the specific educational needs of runaway and homeless youth. Homeless children and youth must not be isolated or stigmatized, and teachers and other school personnel must feel comfortable working with them and their families if they are to make them feel safe and welcome in the school.

District administrators are encouraged to introduce their district homeless coordinator to their staff at the beginning of each school year.

**(F) PLACEMENT CHOICE-The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.**

The choice regarding assignment shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parents, or whether the child or youth is unaccompanied. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless coordinator (designated by the school district) shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions while considering the views of the unaccompanied youth and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal.

**(G) SCHOOL OF ORIGIN DEFINED-In this paragraph, the term "school of origin" means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.**

It may be in the student's best interest to continue enrollment in the school of origin. School of origin may be defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. To the extent feasible, a homeless child or youth should remain in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian.

**(H) CONTACT INFORMATION-Nothing in this subtitle shall prohibit a local educational agency from requiring a parent or guardian of a homeless child to submit contact information.**

School districts may request contact information from the homeless child/youth's parents, guardian, or the unaccompanied youth in order to have a way to contact them. Districts may find it helpful to request this information at the time of enrollment.

**(4) COMPARABLE SERVICES-Each homeless child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected under paragraph (3), including the following.**

**(A) transportation services.**

**(B) educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria, such as services provided under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 or similar State or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.**

**(C) programs in vocational and technical education.**

**(D) programs for gifted and talented students.**

**(G) school nutrition programs.**

Students experiencing homelessness in Missouri are not segregated from their housed peers on the basis of their homelessness and are included in the appropriate educational programs, including compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged, educational programs for the handicapped, programs for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational education, programs for the gifted and talented, preschool programs, school meal programs, and transportation programs.

Students experiencing homelessness are to be included in all regular school assessments.

**(5) COORDINATION-**

**(A) IN GENERAL-Each local educational agency serving homeless children and youths that receives assistance under this subtitle shall coordinate—**

- (i) the provision of services under this subtitle with local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children and youths and their families, including services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5701 et seq.); and**
- (ii) with other local educational agencies on interdistrict issues, such as transportation of transfer of school records.**

The State Homeless Coordinator has worked with shelter directors, legal services, and district homeless coordinators to develop a booklet entitled "Keeping Kids in School: The Educational Rights of Homeless Children". The booklet is in easy to read and understand format and is posted in generic form on the department's website. An updated version of the "Keeping Kids in School" booklet will be made available before the start of the new school year. There has been an overwhelming response for additional copies of this booklet across the state.

The State Homeless Coordinator and the Director of Head Start have both attended The Governor's Task Force on Homelessness and collaboration has begun to develop.

The State Homeless Coordinator has attended and presented at regional homeless coordinator and service provider quarterly meetings at Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield, and at the Older Adolescent Task Force meetings. Service providers include the Division of Family Services, shelter providers, legal services for the education of homeless children and youth, day care agencies, and agencies that work with runaway youth (Older Homeless Adolescent Task Force) and HUD (Housing and Urban Development).

The homeless coordinators and service providers are invited to receive training by the State Homeless Coordinator regarding immunization, transportation, records requirements, lack of birth certificates, school records, other documentation and residency issues.

**(B) HOUSING ASSISTANCE-If applicable, each State educational agency and local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall coordinate with State and local housing agencies responsible for developing the comprehensive housing affordability strategy described in section 105 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 12705) to minimize educational disruption for children and youths who become homeless.**

The State Homeless Coordinator attends/presents at meetings which representatives of HUD (Housing and Urban Development) attend/present at. This has helped to form a collaboration. The meetings give each representative an opportunity to learn of updated information effecting the education of homeless children and youths in the State of Missouri.

**(C) COORDINATION PURPOSE-The coordination required under subparagraphs (A) and (B) shall be designed to—**

- (i) ensure that homeless children and youths have access and reasonable proximity to available education and related support services; and**
- (ii) 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.**

Students experiencing homelessness in Missouri are not segregated from their housed peers on the basis of their homelessness and are included in the appropriate educational programs, including compensatory educational programs for the

disadvantaged, educational programs for the handicapped, programs for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational education, programs for the gifted and talented, preschool programs, school meal programs, and transportation programs.

District administrators are encouraged to introduce their district homeless coordinator to their staff at the beginning of each school year.

Professional development activities should be provided for school personnel that are designed to heighten their sensitivity to the needs of homeless children and youth, the rights of such children and youth, and the specific educational needs of runaway and homeless youth. Homeless children and youth must not be isolated or stigmatized, and teachers and other school personnel must feel comfortable working with them and their families if they are to make them feel safe and welcome in the school.

The State Homeless Coordinator will review and revise (as necessary) the State Plan every other year with an advisory board consisting of district homeless coordinators and service providers.

**(6) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY LIAISON—**

**(A) DUTIES-Each local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths, designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), shall ensure that-**

- (i) homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;**
- (ii) homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that local educational agency;**
- (iii) homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;**
- (iv) the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;**
- (v) public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services under this Act, such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens;**
- (vi) enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with paragraph (3)(E); and**
- (vii) the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, as**

**described in paragraph (1)(J)(iii), and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected under paragraph (3)(A).**

Every school district in the state must designate a board appointed Homeless Coordinator. The homeless coordinator must work to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free public education as is provided to other children and youth. The district Homeless Coordinator's responsibilities include:

- assist with immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth and provide assistance with obtaining academic and medical records;
- make school placement decisions on the basis of the best interest of the child and wishes of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth (if the school of best interest is different than the parent or guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth's wishes, then a written statement explaining the school placement decision and the appeal rights must be provided to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth);
- handle enrollment disputes (homeless children or youth must be enrolled in the school in which the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth seeks enrollment during the dispute and the coordinator will carry out the state's grievance procedure as quickly as possible after receiving notice of the dispute);
- prohibit the segregation of homeless children and youth;
- provide/arrange transportation and inform the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth of the transportation services the school district must make available and assist the homeless children and youth in accessing transportation to and from school;
- inform parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth of the educational and related opportunities available to them;
- disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth in places homeless children and youth receives services (soup kitchens, shelters, salvation army, school, PAT areas, food pantries, community organizations, etc.). (The school district and phone number of the homeless coordinator may also be listed on the notice for contact information.)

The Administrative Manual for Federal Discretionary Programs contains valuable information on identification of homeless children and youths, responsibilities of the homeless coordinator, school assignment and placement of homeless children and youth, school records, testing, immunization, providing comparable services, transportation, grant funding, staff development, and use of local Title I funds. This manual is mailed to each Superintendent in each school district in the state and is available on the website.

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, and guardianship.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identification of homeless children and youths, and the district identifying a working homeless coordinator.

**(B) NOTICE-State coordinators established under subsection (d)(3) and local educational agencies shall inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the local educational agency liaisons.**

The State Homeless Coordinator and local Homeless Coordinators attend regional homeless coordinator and service provider quarterly meetings at Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield, and the Older Adolescent Task Force meetings. Service providers include, but are not limited to, Division of Family Services, shelter providers, legal services for the education of homeless children and youth, day care agencies, and agencies that work with runaway youth (Older Homeless Adolescent Task Force) and HUD (Housing and Urban Development).

The homeless coordinators and service providers are invited to receive training by the State Homeless Coordinator regarding immunization, transportation, records requirements, lack of birth certificates, school records, other documentation and residency issues.

The State Homeless Coordinator has worked with shelter directors, legal services, and district homeless coordinators to develop a booklet entitled "Keeping Kids in School: The Educational Rights of Homeless Children." The booklet is in easy to read and understand format and is posted in generic form on the department's website. An updated version of the "Keeping Kids in School" booklet will be made available before the start of the new school year. There has been an overwhelming response for additional copies of this booklet across the state by school districts, service providers, and advocates.

**(C) LOCAL AND STATE COORDINATION-Local educational agency liaisons for homeless children and youths shall, as a part of their duties, coordinate and collaborate with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.**

School district homeless coordinators will be strongly encouraged to attend, or send a representative to attend, the homeless coordinator and service provider regional meetings and any in-service training provided by the State Homeless Coordinator's office.

**(7) REVIEW & REVISIONS-**

- (A) IN GENERAL-**Each State educational agency and local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youths in schools that are selected under paragraph (3).
- (B) CONSIDERATION-**In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship.
- (C) SPECIAL ATTENTION-**Special attention shall be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school.

The State Homeless Coordinator will review and revise (as necessary) the State Plan every other year with an advisory board consisting of district homeless coordinators and service providers.

The Missouri Department of Education will encourage LEAs to review and revise their policies/procedures for educating homeless children and youths every other year. (included in the LEAs review process may be service and shelter providers within their school district)

The State Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths will be posted on the Homeless Children and Youth web page for public review and access.

Each district in the state of Missouri must have policies and procedures in place stating how they identify and assess the educational needs of homeless children and youths including removal of barriers to homeless students' education, which may include immediate enrollment, transportation, immunization, residency, records, other documentation, and guardianship. These policies and procedures should be reviewed and revised as needed in order to meet the educational needs of homeless children and youths in the state of Missouri.

Department personnel, through the Missouri School Improvement Program, monitor all the policies and procedures pertaining to homeless children and youths, identification of homeless children and youths, and the district identifying a working homeless coordinator.