

THE SOULARD * SCHOOL

Homelessness Policy

Updated policy approved by The Soulard School Board of Directors on February 18, 2021

Admissions and Withdrawal

The Soulard School is committed to providing equal access for any eligible homeless students for which there is space. All eligible students will have access to free education in the same manner as it is given to other students at The Soulard School. The Licensed Clinical Social Worker will review all Soulard School policies to ensure that they do not act as barriers to the admission and success of homeless students. Policies related to immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records, and guardianship will be taken into consideration in light of what could be done to best serve the homeless student population.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- Children and youth who are: - sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a 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; or 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.

If a student is identified as homeless, is requesting to be admitted to The Soulard School, AND there is space within the requested grade-level, the school will determine what is in the best

interest of the child and whether or not the child should be enrolled. If there is no current availability within the requested grade level, the student will be placed at the top of the waitlist. The parent/guardian of the child will be regularly informed and involved during this process. In making this determination, the school will take into consideration the barriers to attending school at The Soulard School as well as the school of origin.

Any requirements for enrollment that may serve as a barrier to the student/family will be waived by the board as required by the law. In instances where it is unclear what grade level the student would be enrolled in, The Soulard School will be responsible for administering tests or other means to determine the appropriate grade level.

Instruction and Services for Homeless Students

The Soulard School will work to ensure that eligible homeless students have equal education opportunities and services. Services that are provided to the homeless student will be consistent with federal law and with Missouri's state plan for the education of homeless children. The Licensed Clinical Social Worker serves as the Homeless Liaison under the McKinney Vento Act.

Any homeless children that are to be enrolled at The Soulard School will receive services that are comparable to all other students. These services may include any transportation services, special education services, social and emotional support services, before and after-school care programs, and extracurricular events and activities. The Soulard School will also work to ensure that the parent/guardian of the homeless student will have opportunities to be involved in the school culture.

Records that are typically kept by the school will be equally maintained for homeless children to ensure that appropriate services may be given to the student. Any requested records will be made available in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Transportation

The Soulard School is committed to providing homeless students with the same educational opportunities as all other students enrolled in school. This includes helping to resolve barriers in getting to school on a regular basis. In accordance with the McKinney-Vento and Every Student Succeeds Acts, the school supplies transportation services to eligible students. When transportation services are requested for eligible students, the parent/guardian and school agree to the following guidelines:

- Responsibilities of the School:
 - TSS will provide and pay for transportation
 - TSS will ensure transportation is on time to the fullest extent possible

- Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian:
 - Parent/guardian will allow school to provide needed information to the transportation company/provider in order to coordinate transportation, including but not limited to student's name, age, address, and special needs and strategies for ensuring successful rides. This information will also be provided to the transportation company/provider by the parent/guardian when directly requested.
 - Parent/guardian will have student(s) ready and waiting when transportation arrives. The transportation company staff/provider is not required under any circumstances to wait or return at a later time.
 - Parent/guardian (or another permitted adult or older sibling for whom parent/guardian has previously notified school homeless liaison or transportation company/provider) will be present when student(s) is/are dropped off in accordance with transportation company policy.
 - If :1. parent/guardian or permitted adult/older sibling is not present for younger students or students in need of assistance OR 2. parent/guardian or permitted adult/older sibling is not present and older student is uncomfortable, unsure of where to go, or refusing to exit vehicle AND the transportation company or school are not able to get ahold of the parent/guardian OR driver has to wait longer than ten minutes (even if parent has been reached), the student will be taken to the nearest police station.
 - Parent/guardian will make all address changes and cancellations with the school by 12:00pm the day before the change is to be implemented.
 - Parent/guardian will treat drivers and transportation staff respectfully in accordance with transportation company rules and the school's Parent Handbook.

Prior to the start of transportation services, parent/guardians will provide a signature agreeing to the above agreed upon guidelines prior to the service.

Coordinator

The Soulard School will always have a designated homeless student liaison as required under the McKinney Vento Act. The Licensed Clinical Social Worker is designated as the homeless student liaison. In any absence or change in the position, The Soulard School will designate another staff member to fill this role and comply with standards for professional training. The McKinney Vento Act states that the homeless liaison will *"ensure that homeless children and youth enroll and succeed in the schools of that agency; and homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services."* Additionally, the homeless liaison will also resolve disputes that may arise in determining eligibility for services under the McKinney Vento Act.

The homeless liaison will be responsible for ensuring all services under the McKinney Vento Act are available through the school. The liaison will maintain required training to ensure that the staff member is up to date on any changes or additions to the requirements of the position. Additionally, the homeless liaison will educate staff, families, and the surrounding community on the McKinney Vento Act.

Resolving Disputes

- A. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth notifies the homeless liaison in writing of their complaint. The homeless liaison serves as the intermediary between the parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth and the school where the child is seeking enrollment.
 - a. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth shall receive a copy of or access to the policies addressing the education of homeless children and youths from the Souard School.
 - b. The homeless liaison will provide a written resolution of the dispute or a plan of action within five days of the date the written complaint was received.

- B. If the dispute is not resolved with the homeless liaison, the parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth can file a complaint in writing to administration for further review.
 - a. The Souard School administrative team will provide a written resolution of the dispute or a plan of action within five days of the date the written complaint was received by the administrative team.

- C. If the dispute is not resolved at the administrative level, the parent/guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth may file the written complaint before the school's Board of Directors for resolution.
 - a. The Souard School Board of Directors will provide a written resolution of the dispute or a plan of action within thirty days of the date the written complaint was received by the board of education. The decision of The Souard School board is final.

- D. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action taken by The Souard School, a written notice stating the reasons for dissatisfaction may be filed with the state director of special federal instructional programs.
 - a. The state director will initiate an investigation; determine the facts relating to the complaint and issue notice of his/her findings within thirty days to The Souard School and the complaining party.
 - b. If the findings support the action taken by TSS, the action will be confirmed.
 - c. If the findings support the allegations of the complainant, TSS will be directed to take corrective action.

- d. An appeal of this decision can be made within ten days to the Deputy Commissioner of Education.
- e. Within thirty days after receiving an appeal, the Deputy Commissioner of Education will render a final administrative decision and notify the complainant and all other interested parties in writing.

Distance Learning Statement

If circumstances arise that lead The Soulard School to participate in distance learning, the homeless student liaison will communicate regularly with homeless students and families. The Soulard School will ensure that equal access to technology and resources are given to homeless students and families. Due to more significant needs arising during distance learning for homeless populations, the school counselor will help connect homeless students to resources for mental health, technology support, medical support, and any other resources that may be needed during distance learning.