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## **Runaway and Homeless Youth Act McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act**

In October, 2003, the President re-authorized the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which ensures the coordination with school districts under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This provides runaway and homeless youth with information regarding education services available to them.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act applies to unaccompanied youth defined as “Youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian, which includes youth who have run away from home or are homeless”. The Act was intended to remove barriers to school enrollment for unaccompanied youth. It requires that states address enrollment delays for youth without guardians and take steps to enroll youth in school immediately. States are permitted to enroll unaccompanied youth independently or through the use of a caregiver affidavit. The McKinney-Vento Act states that schools are responsible for assisting an unaccompanied youth in placement and enrollment decisions, explain the youth’s right to appeal school decisions, ensure the youth is immediately enrolled in school while appeals are pending, and ensure the youth has access to transportation to school (42 U.S.C. 11432).

It is the policy of our district to assist youth with access to appropriate public education and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They will be included in state and district-wide assessments and accountability systems. Our schools will ensure that youth experiencing these circumstances will be free from discrimination, segregation and harassment. Information about this policy will be provided to students who seek to enroll in our schools, withdraw from school for these reasons and to families who are located in temporary shelters or through other social service agencies.

Children are identified as meeting these circumstances when they are found to lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes sharing housing with other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship, are living in hotels/motels, campgrounds, emergency shelters or abandoned buildings/cars. It also includes students who are awaiting foster placement. Youth who have a primary nighttime residence

that is a private or public place not designed for regular sleeping accommodations are also included in this definition. Finally, migratory children are also included under this Act.

- Unaccompanied Youth means that the youth is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- Enrollment at school included participating full in all school activities.
- Immediate means without delay.

School of Origin is defined as the school the youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the youth was last enrolled. Enrollment in a school will be determined based on the needs and interests of the particular student, including the parent or youth's wishes. Feasibility considerations should include: age of youth, distance of commute and impact of the education of the youth, personal safety issues, need for specialized instruction, length of anticipated stay in current location or time remaining in the school year. Services like transportation will not be considered in determining feasibility.

Consistent, uninterrupted education is viewed as vital for academic achievement. Due to the realities of homelessness and mobility, students in transition may not have all necessary documents available for enrollment. The school selected for enrollment must enroll any child or youth in transition immediately. Enrollment may not be denied due to the lack of documents. Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. They may be enrolled by themselves, a parent, non-parent care-taker, older sibling or local liaison (Director of Education).

Dispute Resolution: If a dispute arises over any issues covered in this policy, the youth will be admitted immediately into the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute. The student will also have the rights of a student covered under the Act to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals and other services while the dispute is pending. The school where the dispute arises will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal and will refer them to the local liaison (Director of Education), immediately. The local liaison will ensure that the student is enrolled in the requested school and receiving any services to which the student is entitled and will resolve the dispute as quickly as possible. The parent or youth will be invited to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. The parent, unaccompanied youth or school district may appeal the school district's decision as provided in the California Department of Education's Dispute Resolution Process.

