

HARVEST RIDGE COOPERATIVE CHARTER SCHOOL

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY

The Board of Directors of Harvest Ridge Cooperative Charter School (“HRCCS”) desires to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational program, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state of California academic standards, are provided a free and appropriate public education, are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes children and youths who (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. 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; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the HRCCS Liaison.

School Liaison

The Executive Director designates the following staff person as the HRCCS Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) & (e)(3)(C)(i)(IV).):

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The HRCCS Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at HRCCS.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act, early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, any other preschool programs administered by HRCCS, if any, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
4. Parents/guardians 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.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, HRCCS charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. HRCCS personnel providing services receive professional development and other support;
9. The HRCCS Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that the youths may obtain assistance from the School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of the Act.

Enrollment

HRCCS shall immediately admit/enroll the student (subject to HRCCS's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the HRCCS charter and Board policy), even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C); Education Code Section 48850(a)(3)(A).)

If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Executive Director or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the HRCCS Liaison. The HRCCS Liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C).)

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over admissions/enrollment, the student shall be immediately admitted, pending resolution of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the admission/enrollment decision, including an explanation of the parent/guardian's right to appeal the decision. He/she shall also be referred to the HRCCS Liaison. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The HRCCS Liaison shall carry out the Board-adopted dispute resolution and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

Written Notice

HRCCS shall provide written notice, at the time any child or youth seeks enrollment in HRCCS and at least twice annually while the child or youth is enrolled in HRCCS, to the parent or guardian of the child or youth (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth) that (42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C)):

1. Shall be signed by the parent or guardian (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth);
2. Sets forth the general rights provided in this policy;
3. Specifically states:
 - a. The choice of schools homeless children and youths are eligible to attend, as provided in 42 U.S.C Section 11432(g)(3)(A);
 - b. That no homeless child or youth is required to attend a separate school for homeless children or youths;
 - c. That homeless children and youths shall be provided comparable services described in this policy, including transportation services, educational services, and meals through school meals programs; and

- d. That homeless children and youths should not be stigmatized by school personnel;
and
4. Provides contact information for the HRCCS Liaison and the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths.

Such notice shall be provided to the parent or guardian (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the youth) in a manner and form understandable to such parent or guardian (or youth), including, if necessary and to the extent feasible, in the native language of such parent or guardian (or youth).

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall promptly be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in HRCCS such as (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)):

- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for students with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency
- Programs in vocational and technical education
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- School nutrition programs

Transportation

HRCCS shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from HRCCS, at the request of the parent or guardian (or liaison). (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J))