Homeless Information

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Definition of Homeless

An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth:

• Living in emergency or transitional shelters
• Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds, or abandoned in hospitals
• Living in cars, parks, public spaces, bus or train stations, or abandoned buildings
• Having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations
• Awaiting foster care placement
• Doubled up with relatives or friends
• Migratory children or youth living in circumstances described above

What Families Experiencing Homelessness Need to Know

• Children and youth experiencing homelessness have a right to attend school.
• You do not need a permanent address to enroll your child in school.
• Children and youth experiencing homelessness can stay in their school of origin or enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance zone are eligible to attend, which ever circumstance proves to be in their best interest.
• Schools must provide you with a written explanation if a placement dispute occurs. Contact your local Homeless Liaison for assistance in handling a placement dispute.
• Your child cannot be denied school enrollment because school records or other enrollment documentation is not immediately available.
• Your child may have the right to transportation services to and from the school of origin if determined feasible.
• Your child has the right to participate in extracurricular activities and all federal, state, or local programs for which he/she is eligible. Transportation may not be available for these activities.
• Unaccompanied youth have these same rights. (Contact your local Homeless Liaison.)

Free and Reduced Lunch Procedures

Homeless students are entitled to free or reduced breakfast and lunch and DO NOT need to fill out the regular application. To obtain meal assistance, please email the student's name, ID number, and school name to the Homeless Liaison, Pamela Eakes, at peakes@halifax.k12.va.us. Homeless Liaison will approve the request and submit it to Food Services. Please do not contact Food Services directly; the request must be done through the homeless program.

Transportation Procedures

Halifax County Public Schools will provide transportation assistance for homeless students so that the student may remain at his/her school of origin. This transportation is arranged through the Homeless Liaison's office. It takes three to five working days for transportation arrangements to be put in place. Transportation can also be arranged to accommodate those students who participate in after school activities. Once transportation is set up the parent/guardian is called and advised of the start date and time of the transportation.

To obtain transportation assistance, an email should be sent to Pamela Eakes at peakes@halifax.k12.va.us providing the following information:

- Student(s) name(s) & ID #(#s)
- Name and address of the school that the student will attend
- Address where the student is to be picked up
- Name and contact number for the parent or guardian

Who are "Unaccompanied Youth?"

They are youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian including:

- Young people who have run away from home.
- Young people who have been forced to leave their homes.

Their possible living situations include:

- Living with friends (couch surfing).
- Living in shelters.
- Living in cars, at campgrounds, in abandoned buildings or on the streets.

School may be the only safe, stable environment for unaccompanied youth. Schools can provide the needed support to ensure continued academic success for these vulnerable students. In addition to academics, schools can offer adult and peer support, meals, referral to medical and mental health services, sports clubs and other activities. Schools should also connect these young people to other resources and supports available in the community.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires immediate enrollment of these students and protects their right to attend school without parental involvement. Schools must immediately
enroll "unaccompanied youth" even if they do not have the documents that are usually required, such as proof of residence, school records, medical records, or guardianship papers. Transportation assistance must be provided if the student needs transportation to the school or origin.

Although there is no mandatory requirement to report an "unaccompanied youth" to law enforcement or Child Protective Services, a situation should be reported to CPS or the police if there is suspicion that the student is in an unsafe circumstance. For further assistance, contact the school division homeless liaison, Pamela Eakes, at 434-476-3126.