HOMELESS REFERRAL PROCESS

Children who meet the Federal definition of "homeless" will be provided a free and appropriate public education in the same manner as all other students of the District and will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless.

Homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and include those who meet any of the following criteria:

   A.   share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
   B.   live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations
   C.   live in emergency or transitional shelters
   D.   are abandoned in hospitals
   E.   are awaiting foster care placement
   F.   have a primary night time residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, or
   G.   live in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting

Additionally, pursuant to Federal and State law, migratory children who are living in circumstances described in A-G above are also considered homeless.

Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs administered by the School District.

The District shall remove all barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students in schools in the District. Homeless students shall be enrolled **immediately**, even if they do not have the necessary enrollment documentation such as immunization and health records, proof of residency or guardianship, birth certificate, school records, and other documentation. No homeless student will be denied enrollment based on a lack of proof of residency.

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students in the District including:

   A.   transportation services;
   B.   educational services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or similar State or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;
   C.   programs for gifted and talented students;
   D.   programs in vocational and technical education;
   E.   before and after school programs; and
   F.   school nutrition programs.

Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin or the local attendance area school, according to the child's best interest. The school of origin is the school that the student attended when permanently housed or last enrolled. The local attendance area school is any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

At the request of the parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local homeless liaison, transportation shall be provided for a homeless student to and from the school or origin as follows:

   A.   If the homeless student continues to live in the School District in which the school of origin is located, transportation will be provided in accordance with District policy/administrative guidelines.
   B.   If the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his/her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

The following procedures should be followed when a family is suspected as being homeless:

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS/EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM: The secretary should inform one of the following appropriate staff members in the building to meet with the family. This would include contacting the building social worker first. If he/she is not available, then the school psychologist should be contacted. If the psychologist is not available then the building principal should be contacted.

MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL: The secretary should inform one of the following appropriate staff members in the building to meet with the family. This would include contacting the building social worker first. If he/she is not available, then the school psychologist should be contacted. If the psychologist is not available then the building principal and/or the student's counselor should be contacted.

At each building the appropriate staff person should personally and confidentially sit down with the family and complete the homeless referral form. The family does **NOT** complete this form. Our staff is responsible for completing this form in its entirety, including the events that led to the family becoming homeless and where they are currently living. We need to have an address whether it is with a relative, hotel, shelter, etc. It is also very important to get any type of telephone contact information, if possible. If the student is in need of transportation services, it is important to find out if the family has a car available.

If the student is a new District enrollment, the appropriate paperwork must be processed immediately and the student placed in a classroom as quickly as possible. If the student is in need of transportation, Kaitlyn Stanley, will arrange the distribution of gas cards, bus passes and/or arrange for a school bus with the transportation department.

The secretary should then forward the following information to Sandy Stewart, Julie Schroeder and Kaitlyn Stanley as soon as possible:

1. Homeless Referral Form
2. Receipt from hotel (if the student's temporary residence is at the Select Inn or America's Best)

The above information should be emailed to Sandy Stewart, Julie Schroeder and Kaitlyn Stanley immediately. At no time should a school building submit this information directly to the MISD.