

ICS West Policy:

Students Experiencing Homelessness

The Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School West, in combination with administrators, faculty, and staff, is dedicated to ensuring that youth who may be experiencing homelessness are provided the same educational opportunities as those students with permanent residency.

Independence Charter School West recognizes the need to promptly identify students experiencing homelessness, aid in their continued enrollment, and shall reasonably ensure that existing barriers to attendance and education are removed in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Children experiencing homelessness are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate night time residence. This includes children whose families share housing because of economic hardship, and children living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, and camping grounds because they lack adequate accommodations. Children living in emergency or transitional shelters or who are abandoned in hospitals or are awaiting foster care placement are also considered homeless.

Independence Charter School West shall ensure that students experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same educational programs and services provided to students not experiencing homelessness. The Independence Charter School West Board of Trustees authorizes the CEO, upon consultation, to waive ICS West policies and administrative procedures that create barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability and success in school of students experiencing homelessness. It is the policy of the Board that no student shall be discriminated against, segregated or stigmatized based on his/her homeless status. The CEO or their designee will have the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the policy.

Delegation of Responsibility

The CEO shall designate a liaison for students experiencing homelessness, who shall have the duties and responsibilities imposed by law and Board policy. ICS West's School Social Worker shall work with the School District of Philadelphia's Regional Coordinator to ensure outreach and coordination with:

1. Local social service agencies and other entities that provide services to students experiencing homelessness and their families.
2. Other LEAs on issues of prompt identification, transfer of records, transportation and other applicable activities.
3. ICS West staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

4. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

5. Law enforcement agencies, juvenile and family courts, and providers of services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

ICS West's Homeless Liaison shall ensure that public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness is disseminated in locations frequented by parents/guardians of students experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and food pantries. Such notice shall be provided in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians of students experiencing homelessness.

Education Records

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Information about a student experiencing homelessness' living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Uniforms

Independence Charter School West shall not create uniform and dress requirements that create financial hardships for students and their families experiencing homelessness. Nor shall any student in a homeless situation receive disciplinary actions for not having a uniform due to financial hardship. Every effort must be made to protect the privacy of students in this situation.

Transportation

Independence Charter School West will work to ensure an uneventful transition if alternate transportation (i.e. an alternative school bus route) is warranted. Every child must have a current arrival and dismissal plan on file with our Transportation Coordinator, all changes should be communicated as early as possible and can be emailed to transportation@icswest.org.