

# George - Little Rock Community School

## Homeless Program 2014-2015

*Revised June 2014*

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## **GEORGE-LITTLE ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL HOMELESS PROGRAM**

The growth in the number of homeless persons has accelerated markedly during the last ten years. This acceleration in the rural areas has not occurred at the same rate as in the metropolitan areas of the country and the state. However, the number in rural Iowa is increasing.

The George-Little Rock District uses the following definition of homelessness in this plan.

### DEFINITIONS:

Homeless children or youth of school age is defined as a child or youth between the ages of 4 and 21, who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a child or youth who is living on the street, in a car, tent, or abandoned building or some other form of shelter not designed as a permanent home; who is living in a community shelter facility; or who is living with a non-nuclear family member or with friends who may or may not have legal guardianship over the child or youth of school age.

There are five categories set forth in the definition:

- A. On the street: Living on the street, without even nominal housing
- B. Quasi-homeless: Living in make-shift shelters such as cars, tents, abandoned buildings, etc.
- C. Shelters: Living in temporary residence facility for individuals or families (e.g. youth-runaways, family, or abuse shelters, or other shelter facilities
- D. Doubling-up: Children and immediate family have moved in with other relatives or friends; without such arrangements they would be without home or shelter.
- E. Near-homeless: Without entitlement (e.g. fuel or rent assistance) these families would be homeless.

Certain of the above categories make it rather easy to identify persons within these categories. However, families and individuals could be near-homeless, for example, and the school would probably not know it.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Iowa Code section 33.3 established the responsibilities of the Board of Director of each public school as follows:

1. Locate and identify homeless children or youth of school age who are found within the district, whether or not they are enrolled in school.
2. Post information encouraging homeless children and youth of school age to enroll in the district where services or assistance is provided to the homeless.
3. Examine and revise, if necessary, existing school policies or rules that create barriers to the enrollment of homeless children or youth consistent with these rules. School districts are encouraged to cooperate with homeless agencies and organizations to explore comprehensive, equivalent alternative educational programs and support services for homeless children and youth when necessary to implement the intent of these rules.

## BARRIERS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING:

The barriers which contribute significantly to delaying or interrupting the education of homeless children and youth should be removed from the school setting. These barriers are addressed in the homeless plan and the at-risk program.

The barriers are set forth below along with an action plan.

### Residency & Guardianship

Residency will be reviewed in each specific case. This will not be used to delay the education of homeless children.

### Coordination & Identification

The school will coordinate services with service agencies in terms of identifying and tracking homeless students.

### Program Continuity

The school should expedite homeless students' access to the educational program, nutrition and health services.

### Transportation

Transportation services will be provided outside the city limits of George and Little Rock to assure that homeless students are able to attend classes.

### Student Records

Delays in enrollment of homeless children will not exist. The district will encourage enrollment in school through contacts with parents, guardians and children in shelters of all types.

### Public Awareness

The district will collect information on the homeless and convey this information to staff. The homeless and effects will be addressed with staff and through the curriculum. The district will coordinate with other agencies to involve and inform the general public.

### Action Plan

The Board of Education will adopt a policy setting forth the residency requirements for homeless children. This requirement will enable a child to continue their educational program without delay.

The district will develop model guidelines for the coordination of services for the homeless between service agencies and school.

The district will develop a plan to assure that homeless students are enrolled in the educational program and are provided nutrition and health services including immunizations.

Homeless students who reside outside the city limits of George and Little Rock will be transported to their respective attendance center. Transportation will be used to facilitate the instructional program for the homeless student.

The required records will be waived for homeless children upon initial enrollment.

The district, through in-service, or on the curriculum, and other service agencies, will inform staff, problem students, and community regarding the problem and effects of the

homeless.

#### School Lunch Program and Fees

Students will be provided free lunch pending completion of application for free and reduced lunches. Fees will be waived pending an application for fee waiver.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **Residency Requirements for Homeless Children & Youth**

Given the fact homeless children and youth inherently have problems in their day-to-day life which other children and youth in a nuclear family will not normally encounter. The Board of Education established the following guidelines in specific areas which are designed to enable homeless children and youth the opportunity to a public school education without delay.

- Residency is a question which comes to mind when a child or youth enters the district without the presence of parents or guardians. The district in this situation would require that guardianship be obtained immediately usually prior to the child or youth enrolling in school. The child or youth who falls within one of the five categories of homelessness will be enrolled immediately in school. The guardianship requirement will be waived until such time as a stable home environment has been established.
- A homeless child or youth may enroll in the district of origin or the district where the homeless child or youth is residing. The deciding factor will be what is in the best interest of the child or youth. The district will enroll a homeless child or youth regardless of whether the child or youth is living with a homeless parent or temporarily with someone else, is a runaway or is otherwise with benefit of parent or guardian.
- School records could establish a barrier to the enrollment of a child or youth. Records of each homeless child or youth will be available in a timely fashion when a child or youth enters a new school district. When district officials are notified that a homeless student intends to transfer out of the district, school officials will immediately provide copies of the students' permanent and cumulative records to the homeless child or youth or the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth who may take the copies with them.
- When a homeless child or youth is enrolled in the district, school officials will accept copies of records, or other evidence of placement provided by the homeless child or youth, or the parent or guardian. The child or youth will be placed in the school immediately. The lack of prior records will not prevent the child or youth from enrolling in the district.
- Immunization could be a stumbling block to immediate enrollment for the homeless child or youth. Section 33.5 of the Iowa Code sets forth four conditions which if one or more are present, will allow for immediate enrollment.

These conditions are:

- That the parents or guardian of a homeless child or youth or a homeless child or youth,
1. Offers a statement signed by a doctor that in the doctor's opinion the immunizations required would be injurious to the health and well-being of the child or youth.
  2. Provides an affidavit stating that the immunization conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized religious denomination of which the homeless child or youth is a member.
  3. Has begun the required immunizations and is continuing to receive the necessary immunizations as rapidly as is medically feasible, or
  4. Is a transfer student from another school. School officials will verify either from the child

or youth or parents or guardian or the other district, immunization records. Every transfer should be allowed 120 days to obtain immunization records and to begin the process.

- Fees and other charges which are assessed all youth, will be waived for the homeless child or youth.
- Enrollment requirements, particularly those for high school students, could present a barrier to a homeless youth. The educational program for a homeless child or youth will be evaluated by school officials. A program will be designed which enables the homeless child or youth the opportunity to remain in school. This may mean waiving a certain number of courses or enrollment in certain programs.
- If the district is unable to determine grade level due to missing records, tests and other information will be used to properly place the child or youth in the program.
- A homeless child or youth will not be denied access to the district's educational programs on the basis of transportation. When two districts are involved, they will mutually agree on transportation arrangements for the homeless child or youth.
- The district will make available all services available in the district and AEA 4. The services available may be the following, but are not limited to these: compensating education, special education, English as a second language, vocational courses or programs, programs for gifted and talented pupils, health services, and food and nutrition programs. These services will be available to homeless children or youth on the same basis as these services are provided to all other students in the district unless special arrangements are required.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

The Administration will survey the community and the student body twice during each school year for the purpose of identifying the child and youth who could be identified as homeless. The survey will be conducted via the monthly school newsletter, bus driver rural survey, and student survey. Every two years a complete census of all district residences will be completed. The census will record all homeless persons.

#### COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Complaint procedures are set forth herein to assist homeless parents or guardians or children or youth the opportunity to address concerns they have regarding certain aspects of their educational program.

##### STEP I

The complainant will address the concern with the building administrator. This may be done in writing or verbally. Within five days the building administrator will reply in written form to the complainant.

##### STEP II

If the complaint remains, the complainant may file in writing the complaint with the superintendent. The superintendent shall respond in written form within five days of the receipt of the complaint.

##### STEP III

The complaint is to be filed with the Board of Education. This must be done within ten (10) days of the receipt of the written response from the superintendent. The Board of Education will hear the appeal within five (5) days of receipt.

The complainant may appeal the Board's decision to the Department of Education in accordance with Iowa Code, Section 281.6 and Iowa Administrative Code 281, Section 41.32.

The parent or guardian or child or youth will be notified in writing of their right to appeal. This written notice shall contain the name, address, and telephone number of the legal services office in the area.



## **NOTICE**

### **Persons who are homeless or know of persons who are homeless:**

The George-Little Rock District adopted policies which permit homeless children or youth the opportunity to enroll in the George-Little Rock School District.

Parents or guardians of children or youth should contact the principal's office to make arrangements to enroll in the George-Little Rock District.

Mrs. Molly Schilling is the Homeless Liaison for the George-Little Rock Community School District.

#### Telephone

712-475-3311 George  
712-479-2771 Little Rock

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George Public Library  
Little Rock Public Library  
Total Stop Food Store  
Little Rock Community Foods  
Lyon County News  
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