
Arkansas Balance of State Continuum of Care

Educational Responsibilities

2023

Background

Federal law ensures educational rights and protections for children and young adults 18-24 experiencing homelessness. Protections apply to children and youth who are living with a parent or guardian and those who are unaccompanied. Every school district in Arkansas is required to designate a homeless liaison to ensure that a children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youths. In addition, HUD establishes requirements for Continuums of Care and project applicants through the annual Continuum of Care (CoC) competition while the Arkansas Balance of State Continuum of Care (AR BoS CoC) has also implemented related requirements. This document summarizes basic information about the responsibilities of Local Homeless Coalitions (LHCs) and recipients/sub-recipients of CoC funds.

Responsibilities of Local Homeless Coalitions

LHCs in the AR BoS CoC are responsible for coordinating with their local school district(s) in the following ways:

- Helping to identify children and young adults who are eligible for educational services. If a child or young adult does not have a fixed, regular, and adequate place to sleep at night, he or she is eligible. This includes those living in places not meant for human habitation, emergency shelters, transitional housing, motels/hotels, campgrounds, in doubled-up situations, or in housing that lacks utilities, is infested or has other dangerous conditions.
- Helping to ensure that all families with children and young adults who qualify in your area are informed about their educational rights and their eligibility for educational services and ensuring they receive those services.
- Attending relevant meetings and planning events held by your local school district.



- Ensuring that the local school districts' homeless liaisons are aware of processes to connect homeless families and young adults to Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and CoC resources while helping to resolve any issues that might arise in linking households to those resources.

Responsibilities of Recipients/Sub-Recipients-Sample Policy

Recipients and sub-recipients of CoC funds serving families with children and/or young adults 18-24 (unaccompanied youth) are responsible for the things outline in the sample policy below which is intended to help providers comply with requirements established under federal law, by HUD through the annual CoC project application, and by AR BoS CoC. All projects receiving CoC funds that are serving families with children and/or unaccompanied youth are required to have similar policies. Projects may opt to adapt this sample policy or to adopt a different policy that fulfills the requirements.

Purpose:

To ensure that participants in (*INSERT CoC Project Name*) are helped to understand their educational rights established under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and most recently reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act; to ensure that children and young adults are immediately enrolled in school as required by federal and state law; and to ensure that they are connected to transportation and educational services to help them succeed in school.

Policy:

1. The Program Director and/or their designee is responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring that all families with children and young adults participating in this project are informed about their educational rights and their eligibility for educational services at intake and as necessary thereafter.
 - b. Ensuring that no matter where they live, how long they have lived there, or how long they plan to stay, all children and young adults participating in the project are enrolled in school immediately, even if they lack the paperwork normally required (e.g., school records, records of immunization, and other required health records, proof of residency, guardianship, and other documents), are unable to pay fines or fees, or have missed application or enrollment deadlines. Students have the right to enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents. Enrollment shall occur as quickly as possible and within no more than 2 business days of project entry. Children and young adults who are not required to enroll in school shall be encouraged and assisted but not required to enroll. Families shall be encouraged and assisted to enroll children in early childhood education programs. Enrollment includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities and applies to youth without a parent or guardian.
 - c. Assist unaccompanied youth to choose and enroll in a school, giving priority to his/her wishes while assisting to exercise his/her right to appeal.



- d. Advocating as necessary to ensure that homeless students are able to continue to attend their school of origin (i.e., where they went before becoming homeless or the school in which they were last enrolled) the entire time they are homeless and until the end of the academic year during which they find permanent housing. This includes pre-schools and the designated receiving school at the next grade level when a student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin. Remaining in the school of origin should be presumed to be in the best interest of the student unless contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
- e. Assisting, as necessary, to ensure that the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth is provided with the required written explanation of decisions made by school districts and how to appeal them as well as ensuring that they are referred to the local school district's homeless liaison who must carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
- f. Assisting, as necessary, to appeal any decision by the local school district that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school where they currently live in requested by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
- g. Advocating, as necessary, to ensure that if a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, the student is immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of all available appeals.
- h. Advocating, as necessary, to secure the transportation services to which students are entitled (i.e., to and from the school or preschool of origin, including until the end of the year when the student obtains permanent housing).
- i. Assisting, as necessary, to secure temporary transportation services through other means, if possible, when school districts are unable to immediately provide such required services.
- j. Advocating on behalf of homeless students as necessary to ensure that they receive the services for which they are eligible according to their needs and comparable to those provided to other students including assistance from the local school district's homeless liaison, Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, Head Start, other preschool programs, services for disabled students, free school meals, services for English language learners, gifted and talented services, before and after school care, career and technical education, summer learning, online learning, and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other services.
- k. Advocating, as necessary, to ensure that homeless students who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet schools, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and athletic programs.
- l. Advocating, as necessary, to ensure that students receive appropriate full or partial credit for coursework, including consulting with the prior school about partial coursework completed, evaluating students' mastery of partly completed courses, and offering credit recovery.



- m. Advocating, as necessary, to ensure that all homeless youth receive information and individualized counseling regarding college readiness, college selection, the application process, financial aid, and the availability of on-campus supports. Furthermore, ensure that unaccompanied homeless youths are informed of their status as independent students for the purposes of federal financial aid for postsecondary education and assist them in receiving verification of such status.
 - n. Advocating as necessary to ensure that records, including information about a student's living situation, are kept private.
 - o. Helping homeless students to succeed in school and to get help from the local homeless education liaison, as necessary.
 - p. Developing relationship with colleges to access higher education services specifically for homeless young adults.
 - q. Designating a staff person who is responsible for:
 - i. Helping participants to understand their educational rights;
 - ii. Ensuring that children and young adults are enrolled in school and early childhood education;
 - iii. Ensuring that students get access to all services, programs, and extracurricular activities for which they are eligible; and
 - iv. Ensuring that children and young adults receive the transportation services to which they are entitled.
- These need not be the only responsibilities of the designated staff person.*
- r. Ensuring that the designated staff person is involved in the development of participants' service plans where there are extensive or significant unmet educational needs.
 - s. Ensuring that no policies, procedures, or practices that are inconsistent or interfere with the educational rights established under federal law are adopted by the project.

Resources

- [Arkansas Balance of State Continuum of Care](#)
- [Arkansas Department of Education-Division of Elementary & Secondary Education-Homeless Education Services](#)
- [Arkansas McKinney-Vento State Guidelines and Resources](#)

